SWAMP ANGEL

BY

PRENTICE MULFORD


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THE SWAMP ANGEL.

CHAPTER I.

ALPHA.

I HAD long entertained the idea of building for myself a house in the woods, and there living alone. Not that I was cynical, or disgusted with the world. I have no reason to be disgusted with the world. It has given me lots of amusement, sandwiched between headaches, periods of repentance, and sundry hours spent in the manufacture of good resolutions, many of which I could not keep, because they spoiled so quickly on my hands. I have tried to treat the world pretty well, and it has rewarded me. For the world invariably returns kick for kick, frown for frown, smile for smile; and if my reader is a pretty girl, you will keep your beauty far longer by having ever a smile on your face, that comes from the heart, and is not for company occasions, painted on the surface.

I found at last, in New Jersey, a piece of woods, a swamp, a spring near by, a rivulet, and, above all, a noble, wide-branching oak. The owner willingly consented to my building there, and under the oak I built.

That was five years ago. I was then forty-nine

years of age, and feel no older now; in fact, not quite so old. What others may feel, about my "time of life," is another affair. The main point is involved in one's own feelings on this head. While a bottle of champagne is actively at work in a man's organization, what does he care how others feel as to his condition or age?

I had seen, in these forty-nine years, two years of life as an indifferent sailor on a merchant vessel and whaler. On the latter I was cook, to the misery of all on board who came within the range of my culinary misdeeds. It was not discovered that I had never learned this noble and necessary art until our vessel was off soundings, and then it was too late to repair the damage. I was twelve years in California, where I dug a little gold and a good deal of dirt. I have taught school, tended bar, kept a grocery, run for the legislature, been a post officer, peddled a very tough article of beef on horseback, to the miners on the Tuolumne river bars and gulches, started a hog ranche and failed, served as a special policeman, and tax collector, kept an express office, prospected for silver in the Nevadas, found nothing but snow, scenery, and misery, pre-empted no end of land, laid out towns which are laid out yet, run a farm to weeds and farrow land, and lectured, and written a good deal for the papers. I have tried my constitution and its by-laws in ways both reputable and otherwise, but it 's sound yet, though I could have had as many diseases as I liked, by believing in them and paying the doctor and druggist for them. I have seen Cape Horn, London, Paris, Vienna, a whale in a

"flurry," a ship's crew in mutiny, and a woman who did not want a new bonnet. But she was dead. I lived two years in England, had a splendid time on a very small capital, saw the land from the Scottish border to the Straits of Dover, and lived with over thirty families, high, low, rich, poor, patrician, and plebian. I have an ex-mother-in-law. Before I started out in life, when a boy of fourteen, I had charge of a country hotel, which I ran ashore in four years; but it never cost the girls and boys of my youthful era a cent for horse-hire out of my stables. I had a good time keeping that hotel, which my poor father, on dying, left to my mother. She had necessarily to give it largely in charge of her eldest and only son. I was that son. My mother disliked the business, being soberly inclined, and I got her out of it as soon as possible, by managing, or rather mismanaging, things in such a way that the expenditures went considerably beyond the income. So I did a good thing for her, as well as having a good time myself. We kept a bar, which the boys of my own size patronized to a considerable extent, so their refreshments cost them little or nothing, generally nothing; which fact, though conducive to the general hilarity, did not increase the profits. My native village was a place where for a boy to tell his mother all he had thought, felt, and experienced for the last twenty-four hours, would have brought him enough scolding, and bald, ungilded admonition, as to terrify him out of all goodness and candor for a month; where the girls went regularly to the evening prayer-meetings, there to wish that the boys

might not fail to be on the outside of the church, to see them home; where the boys systematically and conscientiously, and without a pang, lied to their fathers, as their fathers had lied to grandpa; where at fifteen they called mother the "old woman," and at heart ridiculed her ignorance of numerous things outside of her kingdom, because they had caught the habit and idea from "pa"; where one-half the town were total teetotalers, who hated whiskey drinkers worse than they did whiskey, and called all who differed with them in belief and practice hard names at intemperate temperance meetings, and where the speakers got as drunk on zeal, enthusiasm, prejudice, and excitement, as other drunkards do on gin. I managed to abolish our bar in a few years, on the principle of making the expenditures over-size the income, and so did another good thing, as the young men had then to go elsewhere for their stimulant, and pay for it, too; a condition of affairs always promotive of temperance, if not of morality. When I had accomplished all this, and that 's a good deal to accomplish before reaching the age of eighteen, I went forth into the world to seek my fortune, and have been seeking it ever since, with results, of course, some for and some against me. But I 've had a good time, anyway, and I intend to have better.

CHAPTER II.

LAYING THE CORNER-STONE.

I BOUGHT about fifty dollars' worth of boards and joist, and had them carted and dumped under my oak. No hand save mine laid the foundations. I laid the floor first. I had no well-defined plan about building; I laid my floor boards first, because it came handiest so to do. It was so much of the house built, anyway. I let the structure grow naturally. I presume a professional carpenter would have put up the frame before laying the floor. But I felt that if I got the floor off my mind, the rest of the edifice would grow on it somehow, as it did. I know that I violated all the architectural proprieties in building as I did, and performed one hundred times the work necessary; yet the work to me was all play. For it was nothing but a big box of. twelve-foot boards, and when completed, not near so ornate or regular in shape as those the manufacturers box up their horse-cars in, for shipping to distant places. But I was not building to suit propriety or other people. I was building to suit myself. I wanted entire liberty, for once in my life, to make blunders without being inspected, over-looked, criticised, and sermonized by other people. I had such liberty, and I made the blunders. Never during the two months that I was engaged in putting up this ramshackle shanty

did a soul come near me to stare at me, and gape, and tell me I was doing things wrong; or even if such a pest did not say what he thought, to look as if he thought it all the same, and in so thinking make me feel that he thought it. Such people are pestiferous. I want to do things in my own way, and make my own mistakes, and learn as I go along; and when I get ready to ask how to do them better, of anyone that knows better, then, and not till then, do I want advice and suggestion. It is a luxury to go blundering on in this way; and I had it, and was willing to pay for it. My lot was at the end of a big corn-field, in sight of but one house; out of sight of all main roads, and nobody could get near me, unless they walked a mile to do so.

So in the snow and the rain, as well as the mud, into which I managed to tramp a good deal of the semi-swampy soil about my house by hundreds of possibly unnecessary footsteps, did I build and blunder, during the months of January and February. I slept in a neighbor's house at night, footed a mile to the railway station in the morning, reached the city by half past seven, did my two hours' work in a newspaper office, made a summary of the same eternal round of events, such as murders, burglaries, suicides by pistol, razor, rope, or poison, embezzlements (high-toned), thefts (low-toned), smash-ups, fires, bursted boilers, falling elevators, gas explosions, kerosene burnings, failures, and everything else, which are always happening in all civilized communities just the same one year after another, the only difference being that the victim

or the villain has a different name this year from what he had at the same date last. I wonder why people are interested in reading such a monotonous and ghastly catalogue of horrors as I dished up for them daily. I wonder if they will so continue to read through all eternity, in case their lives are spared that somewhat incomputable period. I wonder what is the great necessity or profit of knowing, after you have eaten your breakfast cakes and sausage, that a tramp was found last night hanging to a tree in Central Park, or that an idiot killed himself with prussic acid and died on a park bench, where possibly you may sit tomorrow, because the girl he wanted to marry and make miserable preferred to marry and be made miserable by some other idiot. I wrote also editorials, and told the world how in certain matters, social, political, and otherwise, things were awfully mismanaged, and how they ought to be managed. I was then more interested in reforming the world than in reforming myself, and kept the electric light of my brain turned far more on other people's sins or mistakes than on my own. I worked at this calling long enough to find out that there are three kinds of editors: editors who can write, and have business talent besides; and editors who can write all about it, not having practical gumption enough to drive a nail straight, or tell a ten-months' chicken, when dressed, from a tough, ten-year-old hen; and lastly, editors who can scarcely write at all, but who know how to set others to writing, and tell them what to write about, and so work their writers' brains to great profit to themselves, as

they are justified in doing; for if you 've got one talent, and don't work your other business talent along with it, some one else will turn that crank, and turn what might be your profits from such talent, into their own pockets. I 've sat in editorial rooms alongside of college-educated men, whose minds were storehouses of book learning and little else, who were hacking away with their pens at any work the boss cut out for them, at ten dollars a week; who wrote and grumbled, and grumbled and wrote, poor fellows, because, as they said, their talent wasn't better appreciated; who were always talking of what they would do, if they only had a better show; who railed at this mercenary age, and the mercenary management of the paper they wrote for, and who never dreamed that the only way for a man to get a fair show in this world to air his ideas is to take responsibilities and make the "show" for himself, just as the head man in the office down stairs, who paid them their weekly pittance, had done, and who used them as literary grubbing hoes, because they dare not be anything else but grubbing hoes.

However, I served up daily this intellectual stew, made from the ingredients of our barbaric civilization, with a tolerably clear conscience; first, because I was well paid for it; secondly, I liked the work; and thirdly, because the public wanted their daily horrors spiced as I spiced it; and then at half past ten in the forenoon, I flew back by rail to my beloved swamp, where I labored till dusk, overlooked only by an occasional crow, perched on a neighboring tree, cross, tired, and hungry, because there was no young corn to pull up.

CHAPTER III.

BUYING TOOLS, AND ABOUT BUYING.

Before building, I bought many carpenters' tools wherewith to build. I bought tools during the entire period of building. I bought many more than were necessary. Any bungler of a carpenter could have put up my shanty with a saw, hammer, and the necessary nails. But saws and planes and chisels and augers, with new handles and bright, glittering edges, became fascinations for me. I became involved and drawn into this peculiar vortex of tool buying, and could scarcely pass a hardware shop, without thinking I wanted some of the wares I saw in the window. I did want them. But I didn't *need* many of them, save, possibly, the need of the pleasure they gave me in the buying, and afterwards in contemplating them. There is a great charm in buying new things, whether you need them or not. A passion for buying can so suddenly break out, and empty your purse much faster than you can fill it. I can well understand and sympathize with ladies who go out shopping, and return home dripping with ten times more bundles than they intended. There is a mysterious and dangerous influence in stores, tempting you to buy things, that you find, on getting home, you don't want. I found, after a time, that the only successful method of resisting this was to

brace up, and resolve firmly to buy only the article I had previouly determined to buy. Armed with this, I could get in a store and out again without being loaded down with gimcracks.

Much that I bought needlessly I did while under the influence of those small commercial magicians, the clerks, who make you feel, through and through, on going into their stores, that you must buy something, whether you wish to or not; and that to look five minutes at their wares, without buying, is robbing them of valuable time. You must go with all your wits and full pressure of decision about you, in order to resist successfully the silent power of these men. The whole atmosphere of some stores is surcharged with a buy-compelling element. You are in its bonds and fetters immediately on going in. From the boss down, all are determined that no customer passes out without buying something. That thought of determination is literally in the air; and if you are tired and hungry, and, above all, hurried or undecided, your mind will be captured by these mercantile magicians. They will put their thought in you. You will think it and not your own. Their minds are centred on a purpose — to sell. Hence they are strong in that direction. Your mind is not centred on anything. Hence you are weak. So you buy what they make you buy, when you think you are buying it yourself. You 're not. They 're selling it to you. Small blame to them. It's their business to sell. It's your business, and my business, when we become buyers, to go to the seller with something of

a clear idea of what we want, first; secondly, not to go in a fluster; thirdly, not to have our mind in that store half an hour before our body gets there, as we must have when suffering that general complaint, hurry; and then we may find, on getting home, that we 've bought the thing we wanted, and not the thing the dry-goods magician forced us to buy, and which, on getting the use of our own wits, we find we neither like, want, or need. I don't blame salesmen for so working their spells on purchasers. It's a matter with them of self-protection, after all; for if they sympathized with us, and thereby got into our flabby, aimless, undecided frame of mind, we then should be working and controlling their minds and acts, bringing them temporarily into a state of semi-idiocy, during which they might sell out the whole store to us at half price. It is a wonder to me that salesmen and saleswomen can keep from going more or less insane, when you consider the shoals of cross-grained, undecided, aimless, and run-down-in-mind-and-body people, they have daily to meet and deal with. Because, if you live all the time in an insane asylum, your own head is apt to tumble more or less off its base; and some of our big stores, when filled with hurried skurried customers, especially during the holidays, do suggest the approaches to an insane asylum. Were I a salesman, I would sell my father and mother and all the lot, down to the third and fourth generations, a brass watch for one of gold, and that with a clear conscience, providing they came to buy of me in that wicked and iniquitous frame of mind

born of hurry, indecision, and the desire of getting something for nothing. Carrying such a head about and inflicting it on people is an outrage and a public injury; and I have carried such a head, and did this sin and outrage many and many a time myself.

CHAPTER IV.

ABOUT MY HENS.

I WISH to tell the remainder of my building trials in the present tense. I don't know why, but in so doing I am brought in closer connection with my house-building experience. The reader will therefore consider me as building my house, as he travels along with me in these pages.

I have built a hen-coop, and keep hens. The hen-coop is built on the experience and consequent skill gathered in building the house, and as a result, is in point of symmetry a better construction than the house. I have always loved hens from infancy, being brought up among them by my widowed maternal grandmother, who lived alone in an old house, with numerous hens and cats. She was a queer, quiet, old lady, who never went to church, read her Bible regularly every Sunday, would never have a coal-stove in her house, burned wood, never saw a railroad or sailed on a steamboat, never went out visiting, made beautiful mince pies, ate a piece regularly every night at nine o'clock, gave me one, ditto, took snuff, and hated old T——, the bawling undertaker who lived next door, who was on the howl from morning till night, whose yard was always crammed with hearses, broken wagons, barrows, boxes, barrels, lumber which she said, "always looked as if the devil had tipped up his cart there."

She had seen a bit of the Revolutionary war, had English soldiers quartered in her father's house, and said she liked them far better than the American "skinners" and "cowboys," who, crossing Long Island Sound on boats from the Connecticut shore, plundered and outraged our people, on pretence that they were Tories. It was my grandmother's delight on Saturdays, our market day, to watch the running away of some farmer's team, as one or more generally did, and see the butter pats fall out of the wagon's rear into the dusty street, while the proprietor ran after, crying "Whoa!" and picking them up as they fell. But she could prevail on her hens to lay more eggs, in proportion to their numbers and size, than any other hens in the town.

She didn't like real good boys, and made pets of the notoriously bad ones, and would call them in betimes and treat them to her fresh gingerbread and pie. She liked to have me with her, and I was the only one of the family she cared to see; and I liked to be with her, much against my parents' inclinations, for I had with her more liberty and more pie, and could play till nine o'clock at night with our gang of off-color street urchins, of whom the boss and "Big Injun" was, of course, "Nigger Hen," who lorded it over us and licked us, when necessary, and had more spending money than all the rest of us put together. He was the bosom friend of my extreme youth, until one day I was put up by the mischievous clerks in my father's store, to prevail on him to blow a trick wind-mill loaded with flour, a cloud whereof puffed in Nigger Hen's face as he applied his lips to

the blowing tube. For that he cast me off. So I lost him, and took up with "Hen Hill," whose daily life was an incessant lugging of pies in a basket from his mother's house to his father's pie, peanut, and root beer store. I loved Henry, because, in passing through our yard, as he was obliged to do, he allowed me to sample his pies. We would retire together to the recesses of an empty dry-goods box, and knew skilful methods of raising, with an old spoon, the upper crusts of the mince, huckleberry, and other pies, and abstracting a prudential portion of the inner contents, and consigning them to our boyish and never-satisfied stomachs. So Henry rested while I ate. Externally, Henry was more or less pie, which clung to him in fragments; and where he was n't pie he was ice cream, in stains, for he used to work the freezer in his mother's cellar; and we had another old spoon there, hidden in a chink of the wall, with which we tested that ice cream at frequent intervals, as it grew from the liquid to the congealed form of combination. Little did the little aristocracy of my native town, who ate ice cream in Mrs. Hill's parlors, dream whose fingers had first been in it; for when time or circumstances were pressing, we found fingers as handy as spoons; and I have sometimes noticed, later in life, that people who are enjoying choice and exclusive morsels, may little dream what may have handled such morsels an hour before they were served up.

As I am speaking here of hens, or at least intended to, on commencing this chapter, I have thought it proper to introduce "Nigger Hen" and "Hen Hill"

first. I have inherited both my grandmother's passion and talent for keeping hens, and experience the same thrill of pleasure on finding the half dozen or dozen daily, of white, clear, newly-laid eggs in the nest, that I did when a boy of twelve. The beauty and value of life lies in being able to enjoy what you enjoyed when the body was young, and the spirit, with its new suit of clothes, having shaken off the old one, has come again, "dressed up," into this mundane world. It is from the age of four till fourteen that the sun shines with a glory, and the moon with a lustre, and the very grass and leaves seem fresher and greener than in later years, and why?

CHAPTER V.

MENTAL DIFFICULTIES.

The house has four sides, a sloping roof, two large windows fronting south, one hole for the door, another for the stove-pipe, and about one hundred and fifty cracks: most of the cracks I made myself, incidentally and accidentally, in failures to make the ends of the boards meet properly at the corners, and the rest made themselves, through the "checking" or splitting of the unseasoned lumber. When the warm spring sun came, I was surprised to see how the outer boards would squirm and split; knots fell out also, and left holes, large and small; I got ahead of them by nailing boards over them. I had no idea before that nature had so many unseen forces, always at work to interfere with man's constructions. When the frost came out of the ground, causing a movement in the soil, my floor settled into perceptible undulations. Of course the roof and sides, sympathizing with the floor, settled also. Air came up through the floor cracks. I headed that off by a covering of old oil-cloth. Then rain came through sundry roof cracks; I stopped that with a covering of new oil-cloth, of gaudy pattern and bright colors. It was a gay roof, gayer than any part of the interior; it reminded one of a new check ulster, covering and concealing a coat full of years, holes, and experience. People laughed

at my oil-cloth sheathed roof. They said, "Why not use tin, or shingles?" "Because," I said, "oil-cloth is cheaper by half, and it will last as long as I want the roof." But they said, "It's odd covering a roof with oil-cloth." "Well," I said, "what if it is odd? Somebody must always do the odd thing first, and I've done it. Columbus was odd when he insisted on 'going west' to find a new land. You poke fun at the odd man or woman, and may be in a twelvemonth you'll all be practicing his or her oddity, especially if you can make two cents by it."

The article I had most of, and took least of, in my house-building, was time. My mind was always ahead of my work, rather than on it. If nailing on one board, I was thinking of the next, or possibly endeavoring to generate a plan for the hen-coop. I was always trying to strain the building ahead in my mind; I strained only myself. A thing can't be done well, any faster than when your mind works the body easily and gently on the thing it's now doing. Nailing boards and thinking hen-coop brought me smashed fingers. My hammer wanted then the attention I was giving the hen-coop. The lack of it sent the head on my finger, instead of the ten-penny nail I was driving.

I find that to do things, and do them at their best, it is necessary to put all the mind or thought you happen to have about you on the thing you're doing "right now," whether that doing be the driving of a nail, or the writing of an article which you imagine will make the world's hair stand on end (and it's in big luck you are if you raise a single hair). I

have come to the conclusion that a man's thoughts are literally his strength of muscle, as well as mind; and if you don't believe it, get on a topsail yard in a gale off Cape Hatteras, or a Pampa gust off the La Plata, and while you 're trying, with the rest of the watch, to flatten down and haul in a rebellious sail, heavy with rain or sleet, flapping your face with its heavy-laden canvas fists, and doing its best to knock you overboard, see then if it's the time or place to think what you 'd say to the girl you left behind you, or the girl who left you behind for the other fellow, or plan out the cut and pattern of your next pair of pantaloons. When I was sawing off my board ends under my oak in A.D. 1883 (as time is now somewhat ridiculously computed, though we know the earth is millions of years older, no offence here being offered to the Christian calendar), when I say I was sawing off board ends and wondering and speculating whether or no the Democrats would astonish themselves and elect a President, I generally sawed them askew and awry and on a diagonal pattern, if not basis; and ten to one, if not in so doing, I absent-mindedly used my rip saws instead of the cross-cut, which, of course, as every lady knows who uses buck and other saws, is *the* saw to saw a board's end off, instead of sawing it through the middle. I suffered so much in body as well as mind, through hammer banging of thumb and fingers, sawing boards crooked and tumbling over things, as well as myself, because through original sin and the habit of a life-time, my mind and thought would go straying off on the thing I proposed to do rather than on the thing I

was at the time doing, that in order to cure and relieve myself of so much suffering, I painted in letters of lamp-black and turpentine on all sides of the house, these mottoes: "Take time for all things." "Do but one thing at a time." And yet in the very act of so painting, I forgot my own moral and what I was about, and painted one letter half an inch above or below the line of another; because, while painting, the force I used to handle the brush with, was off and away in some place ten or a thousand miles distant; and if it was there, how could it do the work here?

CHAPTER VI.

WHAT IS OWNERSHIP?

I own this badly-constructed, fifty-dollar house in the Jersey swamp. Very few people own the houses they live in as thoroughly as I do mine. Oftener the houses own them. I dominate this house largely. I can, if I wish, set it on fire. There are no neighbors within sight, whose property would thereby be endangered.

I live in no town or village, whose inhabitants would be alarmed at my conflagration, and who would annoy me by trying to put it out. Fifty dollars' worth of rough lumber would soon burn up. I can cut holes anywhere through my walls, without asking permission of a landlord. I can fill the place with smoke, without fear of troubling other tenants. I can arise at midnight, drive nails, saw wood, or indulge in any other noisy employment, without the fear hanging over me and fretting me that I am disturbing somebody's rest. I can leave my slippers as I took them off, the toe of one pointing north and the other south, and find them a week afterward, on my return, in the same position, and not hidden in the most obscure corner by the troublesome chambermaid. I fear not to leave mud on my own carpet. I am not tied to stated meal hours. I am not harassed by the possibility of unwelcome callers.

My faults, whatever they are, here within these four walls, trouble no one but myself. I own and have the exclusive right to my hallway. I can bring groceries and parcels myself to my own front door. I fear no janitor. I am not obliged to conceal a beer pitcher under my coat, and slip out by him with fear and trembling, if I want beer, because beer at this flat is allowed to be brought in at the front door. I am dominated by no landlady, who grumbles if I eat a peanut in the room, and leave a shell on the floor. I can drive all sizes of nails into the walls. I can paste pictures on those walls, or paint them in all colors, if I choose. I can keep a menagerie in the house, without fear of any other tenant's complaint. Butchers and grocers do not litter my hallway with their advertising circulars. There is no couple resident on a floor above, whose quarrels or Caudle lectures fall down at night through the elevator-shaft into my ears. I am tormented by no neighbor's culinary smells. I have no printed landlord's ordinance staring me perpetually in the face, warning me with pains and penalties if I throw coffee-grounds down the drain-pipes. If water falls on my floor there is no horror of its leaking to the floor below, loosening plaster and damaging furniture.

I have no servant to play the domestic spy, grumble at the butter, entertain her relatives at my expense, break the best china, and be found drunk on the stairs. But Diogenes owned his tub, and could roll it away from a disagreeable neighborhood, roll it in the sun in winter, the shade in summer, and away from the river when it was rising. And he was richer

than even I am. What is ownership? Is it paying for something whose use must be regulated by other people's opinions or habits? How many people, in a sense, own the clothes they wear? Do I own a pair of boots, which so pinch and torture me that I take them off so soon as I am out of other people's sight, or is it the fashionable public which owns these boots, and forces me to wear them? Do I own a standing collar, which tries to cut my throat at every turn of my head, or the fashionable public? Do I own myself, or am I housed, fed, and dressed according to the desire or whim of certain people whom I feel I must imitate, or be nothing?

I saw a woman the other day going home from a shopping excursion, and carrying laboriously six bundles. I saw anxiety in her face and weariness in her arms. When she stepped into the street car, it was with fear lest a package should drop. When she sat down, it was to distribute bundles in front and on either side of her, and then count to see that none were missing. If, on the trip, she lapsed into momentary forgetfulness, she awoke with a start to the sense of her burthen of many bundles, and the fear that one might have been stolen. When she got out, she was still passing through this ordeal and trial of bundles. Yet those bundles contained articles which she had bought because they pleased her fancy. No sooner had she bought them, no sooner had she, as she imagined, acquired proprietorship over them, than they captured and enslaved her. This was on a Saturday night. I have no doubt that some of those bundles waylaid her on her way to

church, held possession of more or less of her soul, and absorbed some of her devotions. I speak in full sympathy with this poor woman, for I have many times been so captured by bundles myself,— bundles of petty cares, bundles of imaginary wants, bundles of borrowed troubles, and bundles of vain imaginings. What a load of care she carried home in those bundles. There were "things to make up." But the dressmaker did not come according to appointment. Care number one. When she did come she fitted the dress badly. Trouble two. When she finished the work she charged more than was expected. Trouble three. When the dress was finished it was necessary to ask her husband for more money. Trouble four. Nor was it finished in time for the party. Trouble five. Did the poor woman own her dress? Did it own her? In building my house, I allowed at one time the lumber to own me, because it was not delivered in time, and I worried over it. I was owned by my two second-hand window sashes, because they were delayed three days on a freight train. I feel many things owning or trying to own me now. So soon as they usurp my mind, and I commence worrying about them, I know they own me. When I am hurrying and worrying to finish my hen-coop by tomorrow night, that hen-coop owns me. When I don't care "a darn" whether the hen-coop is finished this week or not, I own the hen-coop. I once saw a man whose house was burning, and not insured, sit down and enjoy the conflagration and village uproar, and whistle, "What can't be cured must be endured." That man owned the house still.

CHAPTER VII.

RELIGION IN OUR WORK.

The obstacles I have to encounter in building and running my single-guest hotel, are not so much of the outside as in myself. I am generally in too great a hurry. I insist on things being done before they are done. I fix my time in which things shall be done, and am very impatient when the Almighty insists on his time for doing them.

Why should so many acts of my life be to me irksome and uncomfortable? Why is dressing, when I arise at morn, an unpleasant and hurried task? Why should I pitch on my clothing as if a fire were threatening my house?

Why should starting the fire in my stove be such an irksome task? Why may I not arrange the kindling wood carefully, not to say reverentially, put some mind on it, and dispose it in such fashion that when ignited, it shall burn to best advantage? May there not be a sinful way and righteous way of making a fire? Are not our faculties given us by the Creator to be used to best advantage in every act? Does real religion indorse carelessness? Should not religion be a matter permeating, imbuing, and influencing every act in life? Why do I bestow two or three times the strength necessary in pulling on my shoes, and tire myself as much as by an hour's

work, when a little patience, a little skill, a little mind thrown on the adjustment of the foot to the shoe, will make it slip on so much easier? I arise sometimes exhausted, even at the fresh day's commencement, from a five-minutes' tussle with these shoes, all through sheer stupidity. I have expended on them, through this impatience, a certain amount of strength which might, if carefully used, have brought me pleasure. Is not this a sin? Who gave me this strength? Is the pulling on of shoes a matter all outside the pale of religion?

Look at my clothes in this room. Flung about wickedly, disposed unrighteously, two places for every one article, and the only place for it where it happens now to be. Is this religion? Why am I often so long dressing in the morning? Because I cannot find a sock? Where is it found, after a ten-minutes' search? Behind my trunk or behind my bed, where, last night, I impiously flung it, disregarding the injunction, "What thou doest, do with all thy might." But I flung it with all my might — somewhere. Is that the application of the text? May it not mean that in pulling off and disposing of that sock, I should for ever so little time have bestowed on it all my might of care and attention, so that I could, to a certainty, have put my hand on it in the morning, and saved that ten-minutes' strength, used in looking after it, for other uses? How vast is the aggregate of force I waste through these so-called trivial neglects. Worse still, the slovenly act has become the fixed habit, the second nature. I am appalled in the endeavor to reform to find that it

extends down to the tying of my shoe-strings. I find it cropping out when I put coal in the stove, or water in the tea-kettle. I pour the coal in irreverentially and carelessly. Some goes into the stove, some on it, some over it on the floor. So with the tea-kettle; I pour some water in the vessel and more or less out, because I insist on regarding it as an irksome act. It is one I wish to be through with as quickly as possible. I make it a sin, because I refuse to bestow on the pouring, care and attention. The sin brings its punishment in the very doing. The punishment is the sense of pain, through impatience. It is punishment, too, with compound interest, for I must be at the additional labor of picking up my needlessly scattered coal, or wiping up the tea-kettle's slop-over. More strength is wasted. What though I "profess" ten thousand religions, shall I ever be happy if I keep on in this way? What says the apostle: "Let all things be done decently and in order." Is the filling of stoves with coal, or tea-kettles with water, outside the bounds of "all things to be done decently, and in order?" Is it not the Creator's coal? Is it not his water? Is it not, in a sense, the Creator's tea-kettle? Is not the earth's the Lord's, and the fulness thereof? How am I using all these gifts of the Lord's? Do I yet know how to use them?

What am I after on this planet? Happiness. Very well. How is it promised? By serving the Lord. May not the Lord be served in the performance of the so-called trivial acts of life? Yonder on my table are my few unwashed dishes. Shall I allow them to remain in that fashion, offending my eye, through

their uncleanliness? Is not cleanliness next to godliness? But in what fashion and frame of mind shall I cleanse them? Shall I hurry and scrabble through the performance? Shall I make it a duty, or a pleasure? Shall I cleanse that plate with the same care and attention I would bestow on painting a picture, were I able to paint? Shall I feel a certain sense of gratification, when, through my efforts, it appears once more a clean plate? Is not this worship? Is worship pain, or pleasure? What says the apostle? "Rejoice evermore!" Why not rejoice, then, in making a plate clean? Or shall I wash it with fretting, hurry, impatience, and curses, serving the devil while I wash, leaving dabs and specks of dried egg yolk on the rim, and finally wiping it half washed, and soiling unnecessarily my wiping towel, all serving as the little ways and means to contribute further to my unhappiness?

Why have I no appointed place for my wash-rag? Why does that lone, lorn, lost wash-rag, always lying about, always in the way, always to be put somewhere out of the way of something else, and where it does n't belong, why has it become an eye sore? Why each time that I regard it, does it give me pain? Why does it lie a weight on my brain? Because I am a sinner. Because I am too lazy to set apart a few minutes' time, and appoint it one certain, defined, convenient place. Because I refuse to allow my religion to include that wash-rag. Because I am "despising the day of small things." Because I will sin and fall from grace daily, in not, by that wash-rag, doing "things decently and in order." Now, indeed, I know why I am the "chief among sinners."

CHAPTER VIII.

THE CARES OF MY WORLD.

Despite all I can do, the "cares of the world" will invade the house of refuge I have built for myself in this Jersey swamp, of which a very large portion are not worth being cares at all. They run thus:

Whether I shall have my leaky roof covered with tin, or cover it myself with tarred paper or oil-cloth; whether I shall put up some more shelves in a certain corner, for what purpose I don't exactly know; whether I had better for next summer buy the $7.50 handsome nickel-plated oil-stove, or a common tin one, or no oil-stove at all; whether I shall buy a hoe, or borrow one of my neighbor; whether I shall plant corn or potatoes; who will care for my chickens and pigeons when I go to Boston; whether I shall have time at the barber's to get my hair cut, before the train starts for town; whether this spring, I shall buy a seven or nine dollar pair of pantaloons; whether, after all, I had, or had not, better hold on to the old spring overcoat; whether I shall buy a six-dollar umbrella, or make a sixty-five-cent one answer; whether I shall have toast for breakfast, or egg and toast; whether, in a thousand things of every-day thought, which I am indeed ashamed to tell any one else, I shall or shall not, or could or should not, or might or might not—all these thoughts, plans,

speculations, wishes, anxieties, whims, notions, great and small, needless or necessary, often come in a crowd and mob my brain, within the space of half an hour, while I am trudging from the swamp to the station, while Deity is doing his best to amuse me, by the splendors of a sunrise.

Then how I travel back and forth on this care of the world track: how time and again I return to the same old care, anxiety, plan, whim, or speculation; how, rather than dismiss any one of this crowd of importunate intruders, not one-tenth of whom I can do justice to or dispose of, I allow myself continually to be bored by them; how I give evasive answers and deal out indecisions, instead of deciding at once and for the day; how I say, "I'll see how I feel about the new broom when I get to the store," or "Maybe I'll get a new spring overcoat and maybe I won't," saying to the demand, "Call again please," which it does three minutes afterwards; and how I will persist in seeing my hens unfed, uncared for, and starving, when I am in Boston.

Possibly, Martha's mind was "cumbered with much serving" in a similar way. It may not matter what the serving is about, whether a pot-lid of eighteen hundred years ago to be scoured cleaner, or the projected pantaloons of 1884. Possibly, Mary "chose the better part," not in slighting her employments, whatever they may have been, but in refusing to be mobbed and usurped by them. I am never secure against invasion and assault from these cares. Yesterday I went to the city in a serene and complacent frame of mind. It was the first genuine spring day

of the year. The elements were in their gentlest mood. I followed their lead. I walked leisurely up Chambers Street, had my boots blacked by an Italian novice, who evidently did n't know his trade, felt momentarily indignant at the miserable apology for the "shine" he put on them, repented thereof, called up charity and consideration for the poor fellow, trying to earn an honest living, put myself in his place, felt better, paid him, walked off with a pair of boots unequally polished, congratulated myself on my goodness, filled myself up with spiritual pride, boasted to myself that I was a good fellow, and not as the hard-hearted, inconsiderate sinners all about me. Men went by me full of business cares, doubts, and fears, working, scheming, planning, rushing, as is their daily wont, their faces tied up in hard, financial knots, their neckties awry, from lack of time to adorn properly themselves, their legs going with all the might of their bodies, their minds hurrying their legs, and goading those members ever into a quicker trot, their whole souls and beings absorbed, apparently, and captured by the "cares of the world." I said to myself, "I am not as one of these sinners. I am above these things; I am not to be waylaid and captured by the 'cares of the world.' I am contented, happy, and rich in the enjoyment of the hour."

"Let him that standeth take heed lest he fall."

Of course I was mistaken. I did not know myself; I never did. I have been trying these forty-nine years, to get acquainted with that individuals inside of me. I have time and again imagined I knew him through and through, and found myself mistaken.

Some new feature, some new fault, or some old fault in a new dress, is ever cropping out. I think sometimes there are half a dozen fellows wrapped up inside of my skin, each with his peculiar whims, cranks, notions, vagaries, desires, and appetites, and each demanding, like sailors in port, a "day's liberty" on shore. I despair of ever getting acquainted with the whole menagerie.

Serene, complacent, and thus imagining myself beyond the "cares of this world," with naught to do but enjoy creation, and "rejoice evermore" with the apostle, I was suddenly seized with a desire to occupy the remaining hour of my proposed stay in the city, by going for a trumpery mahogany, brass-bound writing desk, I had left at the room I occupy occasionally in town. I have no need of this box in my swamp retreat. I don't know exactly what to do with it. It would have been perfectly secure at the room in the city. I shall probably, next winter, be obliged to lug it back, from New Jersey to New York. It was a passing fancy of mine, or that of one of the other fools inside of me. It was not only a fancy, but also one of the "cares of the world." It captured me, bound me, hurried me to the City Hall elevated road station, drove me up the stairs like mad, to catch a train, and drove me out again at the other end of the road. It rushed me, all tangled up in a mob of other prisoners, more or less enslaved by the "cares of the world," on the up-town South Ferry train. Arriving at my room, I found I had half an hour less than I had counted on for getting back in time to take the half-past three afternoon

train, which carries me to my swamp. There was no real necessity that I should have taken that particular train, save the necessity of whim. That was another needless "care of the world." Nothing would have been damaged, nobody would have been hurt or disappointed, and all creation would have remained in *statu quo* had I taken any one of the many trains running to the swamp after half-past three. Impatience and hurry now possessed me. I "tore round." In wrapping up the box, I could find no twine. I rushed down three long stairways, and to the grocer's to get some, rushed up again, of course, wrestled with the desk, and in tying it, hurriedly made it, thereby, my foe, putting obstacles continually in my way. I scratched my fingers against the brass handles, perspired, swore internally, was angry with everything, boiled with fret and fume, broke the strap by which I intended to carry it, soiled my clothes, lugged it out and to the elevated road station, climbed the wrong stairway, waited ten minutes for a train, which, when it came, was bound to Harlem, instead of the City Hall; lugged the accursed thing down the up-town stairs, and up the down-town stairs, waited more uneasy minutes for another train, got to Chambers Street five minutes too late, and found myself wearied, out of temper, and with two hours of time on my hands, and twenty pounds of writing desk, until the starting of the five minutes past five afternoon express.

"Let him that standeth take heed lest he fall." I had fallen — fallen from grace, tempted by a lure of the world, and an imaginary one, at that. I was rich

just before the thing tempted me — rich in having for the time nothing to do, and plenty of time to do it in; rich in a contented mood and a quiet spirit; rich in caring for naught save what was then and there going on outside of me, before my eyes, and inside of me, as my eyes jotted these goings-on down in my brain. Is not this wealth? Can my brother, Jay Gould, of whom all men, or nearly all men, through sheer envy, speak so ill — can he enjoy more? Do millions in bank insure a contented spirit? But is money alone at the bottom of the "cares of this world"? There was no money in that writing-desk, and I expended at least three dollars' worth of strength, thought, and anxiety over it. Do the "cares of the world" embrace ball dresses not finished in time, ostrich feathers out of curl, gilt binding worn off of prayer-books? Do the cares of the world ever enter a church sadly in debt, a church needing a new coat of paint, a church with a rickety steeple, or a worn-out minister, who will not take the hint that his flock have long ceased to "call" him? What business is this of mine? Have I not all I can do, and more, to resist the cares of my world? Do I not almost daily, when I think myself one that standeth, suddenly find myself toppling over, and falling from grace?

CHAPTER IX.

THAT HIGH SHELF.

In building a house and planning its internal arrangement, especially where it is a house of but one room, and I alone do all the living in it, I am led into the study of having everything so situated that it can be reached with the least possible outlay of time and strength. A man wants to hold all the strength which nature gives him. Strength means enjoyment of life, and in the daily acts of life it pays to regulate its expenditure by as rigid a system of economy as would govern a man in a foreign country, when reduced to his last hundred dollars. When I go tired to the civilized house, time on time have I sought long for my slippers, and found them at last, thrust far under the bed by the chambermaid, or put in the recesses of some closet. Consider the force used up in hunting for those slippers. It's one's very life. Hunt the slipper, under these conditions, becomes a serious matter. Yesterday I reduced the height of my washstand six inches; because, when I wash face and hands, I want to sit down. I want to do it seriously, carefully, reverentially, and get some enjoyment out of it. Why must I stand on my feet before the washstand, and so expend force uselessly? Who contrived these washstands that require people to stand before them? Probably somebody who

deemed this lavatory process only a matter of necessity, of personal duty, and an irksome piece of business. Should this be so? Why should not every act in life, no matter how trivial, be made one of enjoyment? What is the source of *ennui*, and weary waiting for time to pass, but this slurring over and hurrying through of so many of life's so-called trivial affairs? How can a man praise his Creator, and all his works, when he is making a hard job out of some requirement of his body, which is said to be the "dwelling of the spirit"? Is n't it a kind of sacrilege?

I find in general household arrangement a tendency to cause the greatest outlay of strength with the least profitable results. In small family kitchens, the pots, pans, and other cooking utensils will be sometimes kept in a closet fifteen feet from the stove or range, and so disposed therein, that half a dozen articles must be moved before the one wanted can be taken out. Things are hung up near the floor, or near the ceiling. The worker must stoop or stretch like a giraffe, to reach the desired object. Tons of human strength are lost daily in the aggregate, through high shelves. Perhaps you may have noticed that when any article is placed on a shelf higher than the average human head, it stays there a long time. And why? Because you shrink involuntarily from looking for anything placed on a high shelf. You feel the irksomeness of the act in your bones. Thousands of things that people want, and have long been looking for, and wondering who took them, or where they 've gone to, are now lying peaceful and

dusty on the high shelf. Did you ever observe how troublesome an article becomes in your kitchen, or your bedroom, that you have no use for at present, and no place for, and which is always lying round in the way? It may be a book, or an empty paper box you brought home some costly trash in from a shopping foray, or a satchel, for which you have no time, and are too lazy even to find a certain place for. You find it always on something you want. You take it off, and put it on something else you will want in about five minutes. You are bothered by the confounded thing, yet you hardly know it is that which bothers you.

It's the thing always to be moved out of another thing's way, and then put in the way of some other thing. Perchance, if you hang it up, you hang it over two or three other articles — garments on clothes hooks, male or female garments, as your case may be. You will be sure to want one or more of these garments next, and then off comes the satchel without "fixed habitation" from that hook, and on another, and over more things, of course. Finally you get out of patience with it, and sling it up on the high shelf, and wonder, when you want it next week, where it has gone. Surely these things are so. I have suffered myself from them most of my life, and all for cause of having so few fixed places for anything, and for having so many unfixed things in every other thing's place.

Maybe you are a great statesman, or a great lawyer, or a great man of some sort, or think you are, which amounts to the same thing, and is just as good

in the end. You think these matters I am talking about, too trivial for your notice. You are so far above them. But you know you have, when it is all summed up in a lump, spent hours on hours, if not days, hunting for your penknife, or lead pencil, hunting first in one breeches pocket and then in the other, and next going through your vest, and then your coat, and back to the breeches pocket again, and this always at some critical and important juncture. Was it not then that all the strength of your mighty mind was absorbed and poured out, not on the plan whereby you expected to move the world, but in wondering, fretting, and stewing over the loss of that knife, pencil, or spectacles, which you found a few minutes later, under a sheet of paper?

CHAPTER X.

A PLACE FOR EVERYTHING.

One of the greatest troubles in my house, is the endeavor to carry out the law, "A place for everything, and everything in its place." I am afflicted with a tendency to have two, three, sometimes a dozen, places for the same thing. Mine over my domestic utensils is still an incompetent governorship. I appoint places for things, but forget the places. I hang my frying-pan on six different nails. Again, I bring in things, as helps, to the domestic economy, and do not appoint them places at all. A cup, a spoon, a rag, a bottle, even a tack, with no fixed habitation, is sure to be in the way of some other article, perhaps a dozen articles, and hence comes to be in a chronic state of rebellion against the household peace.

The more things with no set places, the greater the war, and the harder it is to put down the rebellion. There is one particular spoon, an iron cooking spoon, between which, and myself, a lively quarrel has been going on, for the last two weeks. Half a dozen times have I given it a fixed place, and then forgotten the nail on which it should hang. The result is, it hangs everywhere. When not hanging everywhere, it is lying around everywhere. It is a culinary Ishmael. It has no fixed use. I have forgotten what I did

set it apart for. It is now a tramp in the house. There is an empty glass jar in a similar state of vagrancy and rebellion.

I have not given it any occupation, or any fixed station. Consequently it is forever wandering over the house, now here, now there, and in more or less difficulty with all the peaceful and orderly jars, which have a business to look after, are minding their business, and want to be let alone.

One cause of this trouble is my tendency to get and accumulate all sorts of things, for which, at the time of getting, I have no defined use. I have a wonderful and covetous eye. I am, when in town, always seeing things, and saying to myself, "That's a good thing to have." It may be a tub, a table, a teapot, a cup, a tin pail, a second-hand chair, a carpet, anything, everything. "A good thing to have." Have for what? I don't know. I refuse to press that question home. I dare not. I evade, at such times, my more thoughtful and considerate self. If I see him coming, I run round the corner. The fact is, I want the needless thing simply for the pleasure of getting it. It is an instinct for accumulation born in me. Perhaps I was once a magpie, and revelled in heaps of old bones, rags, and scraps. I bring my treasure home, which I have bought only for the pleasure of buying. Then comes the trouble. It must be cared for. It must have a place made for it. It must be washed, or dusted, or moved. Or it may get broken, and bring grief to my soul. It must in some way occupy some portion of my mind, and in such occupation it is certain, at some time or other, to

demand some portion of such mental strength as nature has given me.

The article I have no use for, becomes almost immediately a castaway, a household pest, and vagrant. It must in any case be "stored" — otherwise put in confinement. Jails of this description may be found in thousands of cellars and garrets, where the broken chairs, and tables, the old pots, pans, and old carpets, and all, are criminals and useless burdens on somebody's mind.

There is a heap of these castaways in a corner of my room. A basket I have no use for, a large tin box, a small one, a pile of old papers, a pot-lid bereft of its pot, an onion which has joined this disorganized rebellion, two potatoes, now alternately freezing and thawing, a cast-off pair of pantaloons, an old satchel, a lamp-shade, which I am keeping for the day when its affinity, a new lamp exactly its measure, shall come to join it; and in the crevices of this pile, are bits of rope, string, rags, nails, and tacks. That pile gives me a qualm every time I look at it.

Because the heap is not only in that corner. It lies also on my mind. It is in my brain. It weighs heavily there. So do the tramp spoons, cups, and jars, about the house. It would be more profitable to destroy them. I have a trunk half full of old clothes. What am I keeping them for? Economy. To wear them out some time or other. Meantime, they are wearing me out. Three or four times a week do I visit that trunk, to look for something which may or may not be there, and in that looking, in rummaging, and turning over those old clothes, I

spend many vexatious minutes, and no small amount of strength. The question is, "Are they worth it?" I lift a pair of old pantaloons out of that trunk twenty-five times a year, lay them on the floor, lay them back again, do the same to an old vest, ditto to a linen duster I haven't worn for four years, and may never wear again, ditto to three or four changes of under-clothing which are in an enfeebled and doubtful condition; and after spending all this time and strength, I shall eventually throw the articles one by one away, or open at intervals a minute crack in my stingy heart, and give a coat to a beggar, who will pawn it for beer, while I return home and hug myself for my generosity, in so disposing of a thing which annoyed me; or I may sell the lot to a pedler, and lumber my house with his cheap trash in exchange. Had I not better hold an inquest now over these unused articles, and throw away, or give away, all that I have no use, or can see no use for? Shall I not, in so doing, clear my mind of a load, as well as the trunk? I want to get all these articles not needed for the immediate future, off my mind. When off, perhaps better things may come in.

The moral I draw from this strictly for my own use (believing that all morals are the better for being home-made, and for home use) is, never to have more things in sight (ornaments excepted), than I have use for some time within the next fortnight.

But shall the moral stop here with me? How much useless lumber of fact, opinion, event, dates, and the like is there in my mind which I have no use for now, and may never have?

Is there a day coming, when it may be said, "Sufficient for the day is the knowledge thereof"? Must I, to be wise, know every possible fact, event, and opinion, perhaps false, in advance?

How much and how many of all these daily events, incidents, persons, things, and minutiæ of life generally is it best to hold in one's mind? How much is it profitable to recollect? How much is it profitable to forget?

What if I knew the names of all the rivers in the world, their length, the principal mountains, and their heights, the names of all islands, capes, lakes, and seas, the boundaries of all empires, kingdoms, states, counties, townships, and election precincts? Well? I am valuable as a walking register, almanac, encyclopædia, and time-table.

Did you ever notice that the people who are crammed with facts, who can tell the beginning and end of everything, where it comes from, how it is made, where it is kept, and where it is going to, who are peripatetic knowledge-boxes, rifles set with hair triggers, shooting off fact and information at the least touch, and dangerous for this very reason, to approach, are apt to be the people lacking in executive ability, and with all their so-called knowledge, are generally found occupying subordinate positions? Is it because their brains carry too great a weight of things which are of no use to them at present, and leave no strength for the employment of other faculties? Is it really necessary that I know everything, or anything, until a time comes that I require such knowledge? When I own a horse, and he falls sick,

it will be time for me to find out where the horse-doctor lives. But I do not own a horse now, and the horse I do not own may not be sick, and I don't know where the horse-doctor lives, nor do I care to burden myself in finding out, or my memory afterwards, with the effort to recollect his address.

I have seen those rough, illiterate fellows, who in the usual sense "had no education," and regarded with reverence a man who could quote a Latin sentence, taking contracts for building grand roads over the Sierras, and carrying them out, employing thousands of men, provisioning them, and using the brains of educated engineers, and other craftsmen as they would tools. When they wanted a fact, or a tool, or a man skilled in a certain calling, they went for the article, secured it, used it, and when finished dropped it.

I don't need two pot-lids for one pot. One will be in the way. I don't want to wear three pairs of pantaloons at once, necessary as are these articles. Shall I go on putting joint on joint to my stove-pipe, stove-piping Pelion on Ossa, length on length, till it pierces high heaven, because it's a good thing to have a stove-pipe? How much of my youthful book cramming at school has been extra stove-pipe knowledge? What has it really profited me to know that Columbus discovered America in 1492? Did it ever get me a situation, or into good society? Did it refine me? Did it make me more moral, or honest? Did it improve my digestion? Did it recommend me as a good, reliable person, to any human being? Could I travel on this choice bit of history? Could

I get ten cents credit on the strength of it? Did it make me a better judge of human nature?

What, after all, has it been to me but a useless joint of historical stove-pipe, taking needless strength to keep it from being blown over? How many thousand years, if the earth lasts so long, and there are people on it, will it be necessary for the child to learn that Columbus discovered America in 1492? Besides, in after years, I found that even this joint of stove-pipe was unsound. Columbus did not first discover America. I read that the Northmen did, several hundred years before. Then the Indians found the continent before the Northmen, and it may yet transpire that the Egyptians did.

I am willing to be amused by all these histories, records, traditions, speculations, and theories. But to make of them serious subjects for study, to feel compelled to remember them, to run panic-stricken to history once a year, to ascertain if it really was a date known as 1492, when Columbus rediscovered America; to feel myself such an ignoramus for not remembering how those four numbers should stand in line, seems to me something like laying in extra stove-pipe joints, pot-lid covers, and dust-pans, when one may answer the required purpose for years.

Is the mind a magazine, a rag-bag, a closet under the stairs, to be filled full of odds and ends of information? Or is it a mirror, to be polished so that it shall reflect in itself all that is, more and more clearly? And if so, is the polishing process to be like the cramming process?

CHAPTER XI.

A TUSSLE WITH A TREE.

I IMAGINED it would take me about half an hour to put up some boxes, for the accommodation of the bluebirds, amid the branches of the magnificent oak which stands in the rear of my house.

This oak is the pride of my estate. It is erect, lofty, symmetrical, now in its fullest vigor, a temple not built with hands, more marvellous in construction than any palace ever erected, and, in my brother man's estimation, good chiefly for firewood or railroad ties.

In the endeavor to place the bird-houses on it, I find that perversity dwells among its branches. Or perhaps, its desire is not to be meddled with in any way, — a feature of strong character, and marked individuality, whether in men, women, or oaks.

I wanted to put the boxes on the oak, about twenty feet from the ground. I erected a ladder against the tree. The tree refused to allow the ladder to rest solidly against its massive trunk. Whichever way I directed that ladder, it fell against small, but stout, branches, stout as steel springs. These fought the ladder, and warded it off against too near approach.

I tried to insinuate the ladder between these crabbed, obstinate, little branches. They resisted intelligently all such tactics. Where the ladder's end

edged in a little on one side, a cat's claw of a branch managed to catch it on the other. Meantime I myself, the human, moving machine at the ladder's foot, was expending much force in these vain efforts. For it was an old, and very heavy ladder — a house-painter's ladder.

I saw that I must cut these branches off. I could not reach them from the ground so to do. Nor could I saw them off by getting on the ladder, as it leaned against them, since to do this might be to saw myself off, in a sense. The axe failed to cut them off, because I could not get in a position to deal an effective blow. I had recourse to a hand-saw. I would saw from the top of my step-ladder.

Posting the step-ladder at the foot of the tree proved another difficult operation, for the ground was uneven, and it was necessary to level off a place to give the base a secure hold.

At this time, it occured to me that I was a long way off from placing those bluebird boxes. Every move thus developed and necessary in this undertaking, seemed to carry me farther from the aim first sought — that of nailing the boxes to the tree. I had commenced with the endeavor to place a ladder against the trunk, found mind and body intercepted by those obstinate branches ; had left the branches, and now found myself at work with a pick and shovel on the ground. I thought to myself: "I wonder how far I must travel away from those boxes in this fashion in order to get them. Is this one of those affairs in life, seemingly so easy of accomplishment, really so difficult, which looks as if it could be

done in a day, and which may require years? At all events, the affair is assuming the aspect of a sort of game, or rather combat, between myself and this tree, and I 'm going to drop all hurry and anxiety to place the boxes, and see which of us, myself or the tree, are to be masters of the situation.

The step-ladder sided with the tree, and was unreasonably particular in getting a level base, now toppling as I stood on it, over on this side, now on that, in a decrepit, helpless sort of fashion. It was a striking example, in its seeming efforts to overturn me, of what a friend calls "the total depravity of inanimate things."

At last I mounted the ladder, and commenced operations with the saw, on branch number one. The branch being green, and full of sap, the saw stuck, and hung in an obstinate manner. Being on the top board of the step-ladder, my footing was shaky and uncertain. I sawed, worried by the thought of a possible broken neck, or leg, and experienced great wear and tear of mind and body, in consequence. Branch number two required a change of location for the step-ladder, and another secure level for its base. So did branch number three. By the time the three branches were off, I found myself forgetting the original intent of all this work, and even wondering, at times, what I was working for.

The branches were at last out of the way, and all seemed plain sailing. I raised the heavy ladder against the tree. It rested securely against the trunk. I mounted it, with one of the boxes in my hands, got two-thirds of the way to the ladder's top, heard some-

thing crack ominously, and found that the left ladder upright had a diagonal split running through it, was threatening every instant to part, and that my neck was in greater danger than ever. I descended rapidly, but carefully, from the ladder. Another instance of the total depravity of inanimate things.

There was nothing to do but repair the ladder. The placing of the bird-boxes on the tree, had retired farther in the distance than ever. I said then to myself: "I wonder where this undertaking will carry me, ere it is finished. What new thing shall I find necessary to incorporate into this job? Perhaps it may bring me to the repairing of my hen-coop. It may take me to the city, to get some needed article. It may carry me to Europe. I may be obliged to consult with lawyers, and jurists, all through some indirect operation or development, growing out of this bluebird box business. It has already cost me two and one-half hours' labor, and I expected to accomplish it in thirty minutes." But I am now prepared for war. I will devote the whole day to this undertaking; perchance two whole days.

I repaired the ladder carefully, nailing braces both within and without the broken upright. I placed it in position, and mounted it, carrying a bird-box with me. Arrived at the ladder's top, I found I could not climb the tree to the spot where I desired to nail the box, with the box in my hands. So I went down the ladder again, and placed the box on the ground. Then I went up the ladder so far as it reached, and thenceforth took to climbing. More obstacles presented themselves. Branches got directly in the

way. Twigs scratched my face, and tried to put out my eyes. Bits of rotten branches and dry bark dislodged, and fell into my eyes. There was more cutting away to be done. I descended the ladder for my hatchet, got it, and trimmed a road up the tree. All, as I supposed, being ready, I descended again for the box, and remounted. It was necessary to take with me a hammer, a gimlet, and some nails. I tied the hammer about my neck with a cord, and put the nails and gimlet in my vest pocket. Arrived at the place where I would nail the box, I found it necessary to use the hatchet. Common sense, or a few seconds' thought, might have taught me that as the hatchet would probably be needed again, it should have been stuck by the blade in the tree. No. I had pitched it from the tree on the ground. So I went down the ladder again for the hatchet.

These continual ascents and descents began now to alarm me. They seemed endless, and at the present rate I could vaguely see more and more in the dim distance of futurity, before the boxes were fastened.

I finished with the hatchet, and was turning the current of my thoughts on the hammer, when, that instrument being tied, so to speak, by the neck, suddenly as I leaned over a branch, turned a somersault, slipped through the knot, and fell straight to the ground. It fell wonderfully straight through the branches, and on reaching the ground, lay there with a dull, sullen, "come-down-from-there-and-pick-me-up" expression.

I did not come down immediately. I leaned over

the branch and swore at that hammer. But it did not rise. Then it occurred to me how amusing all this might be to any third party, who had nothing to do but look on and see the performance. I said: "Why should I not be the third party?" But I reminded myself that the third party had nothing to do but sit down and be amused, whereas I had all these perpetual ascensions and descensions to make, besides being amused. The contract was too large. I could not be thoroughly amused, and do all the work besides. So I descended again, with what patience I could summon. I picked the hammer up. I wanted to ring its neck. But what comes from ringing a hammer's neck? Naught save the necessity of buying a new hammer.

The hammer was picked up, as it desired to be. Again I climbed the ladder. In the midst of an apparently speedy despatch of these labors, a new trouble presented itself. The tree had changed its tactics, and called a new ally to its aid.

This ally was a hen — one of my hens. My back door and only door had been left open. This hen had entered, was on my table consuming the remains of my breakfast, and threatening destruction, with her awkward legs and claws, to my crockery. It is this particular hen that annoys me in this way more than all the rest. While they are off foraging in the field, she hangs round that back door, bent on thieving and plunder.

I cried out "shoo!" from above, several times, to no purpose. She wouldn't "shoo." She paid me no respectful attention whatever. She knew well enough

she had plenty of time to clear out of the house before I could get down from the tree. I made her several threatening remarks. She cocked up one eye, winked at me in a contemptuous manner, and calmly went on pecking. I threw several twigs in the house, to no purpose. I descended the ladder, and wrathfully drove her out. She went out as hens generally do from any pent-up place, by the longest possible way, with great risk to window-panes, and fragile articles, from her fluttering wings, and with a great cackle and outcry, as if she deemed it an outrageous proceeding on my part, thus to disturb her while peacefully engaged in converting the breakfast scraps into fresh eggs for my own use, which cackle and outcry was re-echoed by the head roosters of her community in the field, as if they, too, concurred, and heartily seconded her opinion of me.

So rebuked, I climbed once more the ladder, and put myself in position for nailing on the boxes, a work of some difficulty, since I was obliged to make my body conform to the shape and requirements of the tree, and the various divergences and contour of its trunk and branches. Effecting one position, I found that in it I could not strike a blow with the hammer, through the interference of a hostile little limb. In another, I could not pull the nails from my vest pocket. I found myself for the work immediately in hand, constantly lacking in the requisite number of legs and arms. It seemed to me I could have kept then and there employed, six or eight more of these members. I realized then the great advantages for such kind of work possessed by certain monkeys,

who could have slung themselves airily and gracefully from a branch, by their strong and flexible extension of vertebræ, leaving all the arms and legs free for other uses. I was so reflecting when I heard a tiny, modest drop to earth. It was the gimlet, for which I had immediate use. It had fallen from a vest pocket. A few nails gently pattered after it. Then there was wrath. But to what purpose? Gimlets on the earth respond and rise no more to expletives than do hammers. The gimlet would not come to me. I went by the old and usual route to the gimlet, wondering, as again I wearily climbed the ladder, if patience to work out one's salvation must, like eternity, be infinite; and if one's charity must be stretched to cover this total depravity of inanimate hammers and gimlets.

I nailed the boxes in position. All now seemed to work smoothly. I finished the work, and went down the ladder, as I supposed, for the last time. I surveyed those four boxes with pride and admiration. I took away the ladder, and lugged it afar to a distant corner. I resurveyed the boxes, and discovered that one of them was hanging by a shred of bark, shaking with the breeze, as the nail had not penetrated to the wood of the tree, thus proving again the total depravity of inanimate things.

I would not succumb. All my pride and stubbornness was now aroused. I had ceased to regard the placing of those boxes on the tree as of the first importance. This, with me, had been superseded by the desire of winning in this game, or contest, with my splendid but stubborn oak. I re-erected the ladder,

refastened the box, and then waited to see what new ugliness on the oak's part would come. But none came. I had conquered.

During the week, several house-hunting birds have inspected these apartments. They seem difficult to suit, and make no choice.

I thought, when I commenced writing this story, there was a moral concealed in it somewhere, or hanging to its skirts. Now that I have finished it, I can't find any. I deem it more kind and considerate to leave the reader to find his or her own moral, and apply it where it is needed. I have in the past too much erred in going round slapping moral mustard plasters on people's skins, regardless whether they wanted them or not.

And no bluebirds, nor any other birds, would ever live in those boxes.

CHAPTER XII.

A MOB OF THE MIND.

THERE are forty things in this house of mine which "want doing," as we say.

The tea-kettle leaks, and should be in the tinman's hands. The floor needs scrubbing. The invalid rocking-chair has a broken back. There are holes in the heels of sundry socks. A jar of preserves has soured on my hands, and needs cleaning. Various shelves need dusting. A lath is off the hen-coop. My plans for a garden are gradually maturing, and coming to the front. One of my hens wants to "set."

There are two letters to write, and also some wood to cut, as well as water to bring, and some bread to be ordered from the baker. Besides which, I want, of all things, a rhubarb pie, and there's a broken window to be mended. There is no end to the wants; and I can plan more work for my hands in five minutes, than I could do in a month. Besides, my lamp wants filling; and where has that knife gone to? And the wood has n't come.

Each of these wants represents an individual, with a demand for time, care, and work. Collectively pressing upon me, they form a mob, and prevent me from doing anything. At times this whole mob rushes clamorously upon me, each yelling his demand, and insisting on being served first. I have endeavored

to accommodate them, by serving them as fast as possible. This endeavor was a failure. I satisfied none, did nothing well, and did no justice to them or myself. I endeavored to mend the hen-coop, while my mind went back to the kitchen, where some corn bread was baking. Mind being off my hammer, that descended on a finger instead of a nail, tearing off skin and flesh. Then I smelt the corn bread burning. It *was* burning. Two things cannot occupy the same place at the same time. Body in the hen-coop and mind in the kitchen mixes things up; and out of this maladjustment I got a bloody finger, a burned corn cake, an illy repaired coop, a loss of serenity, and a consequent loss of strength.

I tried to write a private letter. My mind strayed off on the broom lying on the floor. I rose to put it in its proper place, and kicked over a pot of red paint. Another mixture of mind and matter ensued.

The next day the same mob came clamoring about me. I then arose, equal to the emergency. I said, "This row must be stopped. I 'll stop it first in my mind. Though chaos reign in the house, though everything wants doing, there shall be but one thing done at a time, by as much of this mind and body I carry about me as I control. Out with ye all! Begone! till I can make up my mind which of you is a must or not — a mere want or a pressing need, a thing which my comfort requires for the hour, or a thing which can be put off till tomorrow without damage."

The mob simmered down to a few individuals. Beyond cutting some wood, bringing some water, and

two or three other "chores," there was nobody but could afford to wait.

I attended to these "musts," and then applied myself to one of the unnecessaries.

This one was my garden. I am cultivating a few plants, native to the soil, which I transplant from the neighboring thicket. I want to give these floral aborigines a show, and see what they will come to. I transplanted four very small young cedars, and in the middle placed a very pretty wild running vine, whose common name I don't know, and whose botanical name I don't want to know.

So far so good. I was working leisurely and pleasantly, feeling it rather a holiday business than otherwise, when suddenly a vast ambition came into my mind, to make a series of circles and walks of a number of young cedars, and adorn a much larger space with other plants. Ere I was aware of it the ambition grew, possessed, and governed me. I was hurried by it, strained by it, and tired by it. I found myself rushing to and from the grove with transplanted plants, digging furiously, and setting my mind far ahead of my work. In fact, one of the mob of wants, desires, plans, whims, aspirations, call them by what name you please, had captured me, and was making a slave of me. I sat down and said, "This row must stop, too, and order shall reign in Warsaw. I will not be commanded by all or one of you."

I abandoned the great gardening ambition, and confined it to its original proportions. Then I felt bet-

ter. That row was stopped. But all are not yet stopped. This empire of mind has long been badly governed, and something like insurrection still exists in it. These old foes are always at the gates, ready to rush in at the least opening.

CHAPTER XIII.

PAINTING THE HOUSE.

I AM now engaged in painting the interior of my house in various colors. Some might call it daubing. I call it frescoing. I have a right to dignify my own style of ornamentation by the best name I can find.

I am also painting the furniture, and all the domestic appliances I can lay hands on. My pails, kerosene-can, and coal-scuttle are now of a bright vermilion. The general color of walls and floor is red. The beams are to be blue, or any other color handy, when the time comes to paint them.

I like a good deal of red in the inside of the house, because it seems or *feels* a sort of warm color. Some would call my taste gaudy. Be it so. Perhaps I am in the gaudy phase of existence. So may be some other power, when it paints the rose, or the peony, the apple, or the sumach cluster of berries.

I do not make work of this painting. I paint at odd intervals, when the inspiration is upon me. It is a pleasant way of filling in certain little chunks of time, which otherwise might be tedious. The paint-shop occupies one certain shelf, and is always ready for business. A mixture of oil, turpentine, and coloring matter is all that is needed.

The advantage of painting in this way, lies in the

liberty I enjoy to paint as I please, or "paint out" as I please. I paint for fun; when it becomes work, I stop painting. I get the same pleasure out of this style of painting, that the child does in coloring yellow the picture of the battle of Bunker Hill, and dyeing the fallen General Warren a marine blue. It's innocent recreation, even if you call it childish. Besides, I care little whether you call it childish or not. I might say that your painting your expensive house by hired painters, or the laying out of your grounds by hired gardeners, or the stabling and care of your horses by hired grooms, or the keeping and sailing of your yacht by hired sailors, involved only another system of playthings for you, the man, the "child of larger growth." Only it is doubtful if you get as much comfort out of these as I do from a dollar's worth of paint and paint-brushes. Still, I hope you do, and more. I have a right to enjoy myself in a "childish" fashion, and I hold a childish pleasure to be better than a matured pain.

I observe that the work, be it what it may, that is best done, is that in which the doer becomes most absorbed, heart, soul, mind, and body, and then it ceases to become work at all. It is play. When the true artist finds himself "working" on his picture, he will lay aside his brushes, and wait till he can again make play of his occupation. The divinity of art does n't work at all; no more than the race-horse "works" when endeavoring to pass his rival, or the bird "works" in its joyous song, or flight. Cart horses "work." So do men, women, and children, compelled through circumstances to use brain, bone,

and muscle, from sunrise to sunset, and who fag on through the long afternoon hours, until all interest, pride, or pleasure in their occupation is gone, because there is no strength left to keep it up.

Having for seven years swung a pick in the mines of California, I know something practically about work. Picking and shovelling dirt was fun for me till eleven or twelve o'clock in the morning. In the afternoon it soon became work. I noticed that my "pards" also took longer rests in shovelling after three or four o'clock, and that the flight of the sun toward the western horizon was watched with much greater interest after that hour. Why? Because their occupation had ceased to be play, and body and soul, too, were crying out for rest, and a chance to recuperate. The fire in the blood was nearly out; the lamp of life was burning lower, and Nature was asking that these lamps be taken home and refilled.

Of course my paint flies around at times, specking and staining various articles. There are flecks of red on the marine blue, and *vice versa*. The floor has received more or less involuntary painting, and sundry utensils show the marks of my colored April shower.

I do not allow such trifles to trouble me. If I did, my house would soon be as full of trouble as it is now full of paint stains. I think that one of the first steps on the road to heaven is the ability to cease to be annoyed by trifles. Did I give way to the bent of the evil inside of me, I could soon become as much annoyed by a paint stain, or a grease spot, or a broken saucer, or any other occasional house-

hold irregularity, as I would be by the loss of a friend. I can allow these troubles so to grow on me as to absorb and swallow up a great deal of my capacity for enjoyment of other things. I desire and aim to paint as smoothly as I can; to leave no "holidays" on the wood, as the sailors call the bare marks left by a slovenly ship painter. But when I do make them, as often I do, I am not going to be overwhelmed by them. They are mistakes and errors. They are my mistakes and errors. Being mine, I have a right to them, and all the annoyances, or experience, or wisdom, through such experience, they may bring me. And any other mistakes I may make in life, great or small (and I expect to make many), I hold in the same regard.

Or rather, I preach this doctrine to myself, but do not always practice it. It is so much easier to preach than to practice.

I find great use and enjoyment in my house painting, other than that conferred by the exercise. It affords in doors a continual change of scene and color. I don't want to paint the whole interior at once. I would not be able to enjoy the whole at once as in detail. It is, so to speak, too big a meal—of paint. But when, in a leisure moment, I cover a square yard of the house red, I enjoy the change of color that it brings, and the contrast with the bare board still unpainted. This makes of my painting a prolonged and continual feast. It gives variety. Every day, through these small efforts, I enjoy a continual change. Being at full liberty to do as I please, I can, when one set of colors tires me, change them

for another, in the same gradual way. As for finishing this prolonged holiday of painting, and sitting down and saying, "I am done," I want no such consummation. I intend painting on indefinitely. There is, for me, a large moral hidden in this matter. I leave it to the reader to pick out for him or herself.

There is also another pleasure in this occupation, because I feel at full liberty to make my house look as frightful as I please, without caring what people will say. Having no neighbors or callers here, I am entirely free from the tyranny of "what people may say." This is a luxury worth about forty dollars a month.

I am only copying Nature's process out of doors. She is painting in all the colors of the early spring foliage. The fields are showing their first faint tinge of green. Day by day it deepens. There 's a blush of "Indian red" in the woods. That comes of the first burst of the elder buds. The other colors are gradually coming in and blending together. But Nature is the great, grand painter who frescoes the whole land, save where it is dotted and blotted with the big cities, where trees are so much left out, because they are in the way of trade.

CHAPTER XIV.

BARROWFUL OF "BLUES."

It was a rainy day, very black, very wet, the ground a muddy sop, the sky a dull, leadenish-hued dome. It gave me a fit of the "blues." I raked up certain old griefs out of the ashes of the past, borrowed some new troubles out of the future, and put them all under the powerful microscope of a morbid imagination, which magnifies the awful about a thousand times, and diminishes the cheerful, when applied to it, in a similar proportion.

I notified the world that it was an unfit place to live in, a "vale of tears," a shame and disgrace to its Maker. In about an hour, I had arranged for myself a large and commodious hades, where, on every side, naught was to be seen but the wrecks of all earthly hopes, lying about in dust and ashes, and every ideal a will-o'-the-wisp, leading to quagmires of disappointment.

Finally, all this became so horrible that at last it occurred to me that it was about horrible enough. It was more than I could bear. I said, "I am satisfied. I 've got all I want of this. Why is this blackness, anyway? The sun was bright yesterday. So was I. That same sun is shining somewhere today. I think I have got about the same mind I had yesterday. Is n't it capable of enjoying, as then? Whence

this difference in my views of life? Then I was on good terms with the world and myself. Is this gloom owing to a few billion drops of water falling from above? Is it due to the sombre hue of the clouds, the dirty sop under foot, and the general deadness of the landscape, which in a short time will have all its new spring verdure? Am I to be so downcast merely by a color?" People are depressed or cheered by surroundings. Nobody goes into a dark cellar to spend a cheerful evening.

That bird in the tree yonder sings merrily enough, despite the rain. How does he keep up his spirits in such weather? If the bird can throw off this gloom, so ought I.

Among the people inside of me is one who, at times, advises and suggests. He is not a favorite of mine, since he is apt to intrude his monitions when I least want them, possibly because it is then they are most needed.

"If you will allow me," said he, "to make a suggestion. I don't want to intrude advice on you. I know it's disagreeable. I hate it myself. It has a preachy-preachy, reproving, I-am-better-than-thou sort of twang, and it's hard to take. Besides, there's so much of it in the world. Everyone seems to carry a dose in his pocket — not for himself, but for others. Still, I would like to make this suggestion to you, and please hear it, just as you hear that bird singing.

"You know what you want. That's a gain. You want to get your thoughts out of the gloomy rut they're now running in. It's a big step for you to know what you want in your case. Many people

afflicted with the 'blues' do not make any effort to get rid of them. They allow their minds to travel over and over the same gloomy road. They allow their moods to command them, instead of trying to command their moods. You know that you want to get your mind out of that mood. Now wheel that barrow to the wood-shed; wheel it as carefully as you can: make a game of wheeling it; wheel it through the stubble field so as to expend the least possible labor in the wheeling; wheel it so as to avoid holes, and rocks, and miry places; put your whole mind on the barrow, and when you get to the wood-shed, pile it very carefully with wood; pile the sticks nicely, so they will not fall off; pile them with attention, precision, and daintiness; then wheel the barrow back to the house, with the same care; carry the wood into the house; don't fling it down by the stove, as you would throw a snake off your person, but put all your mind on piling, so as to make a neat, creditable pile, and see then if a part of your horrors, at least, are not cast out of you."

"This is something like prescribing those seven baths in the river Jordan to that scriptural general for his complaint," I thought. "However, the baths cured him. I'll try the barrow cure."

I wheeled the barrow a short distance, made a game of it, in getting the greatest amount of go out of the vehicle, with the least amount of push, avoided ruts, stones, and the deeper hollows. I did feel somewhat lighter. I seemed to be wheeling it out of hades. But all at once, involuntarily, I relaxed my vigilance in fixing my brains on the bar-

row. I ran in a rut, — two ruts. The barrow in one; my thoughts in that old, gloomy rut of recollection and anticipation. "The bright days of yore that would never come back." The "What 's the use of living, anyway?" The absent never to return, or if returned, to return changed. The "What 's it all for?" The fleeting years, the growing old, the "ah me!" and the "heigh-ho!" and "such is life" — that remark with which so many close up some sad story, and which seems to say, "Well, it 's the best life and the best world we 've got, anyway, and mighty poor affairs, both of them, at that."

"There you go," said my monitor, "off in the rut again; never mind, it 's habit. Your mind has been so long in this habit, it runs into it involuntarily. Your doors open so easily into your hades, hinges all oiled, bolts ditto; they turn so easily. The others, opening to the brighter rooms, are all rusty, from want of use. Got lots of work before you to set this thing to rights. You must try again, and fail, and keep on trying, and fail and fail and fail, and try and try and try, and fail and try, and try and fail, a long time. No other way out of it. Sure cure in time, but a long time to make the sure cure. It 's all a part and parcel of this "working out your salvation." When you get practice enough to keep your mind fixed on a certain subject for, say ten or fifteen minutes, why, then it will stay fixed of its own accord, until you want to change it."

I put my mind on the work again, and wheeled about half a dozen steps. Then my pet grievance

got into the barrow. I forgot the wheeling. The pet grievance thus worked on my mind: "If So-and-so had 'nt said this and that. I know I was partly wrong. But, by George! I never went so far as to say, or to think, or to do — "

"You 're off again," said the adviser; "you 're not attending to that barrow."

I buckled to the barrow. "Gracious," went my mind. "Can't I put this mind of mine on one particular thing for ten seconds? What a weak thing it is, to be forever slipping off the work right in hand."

"You 're off in another rut," said my monitor. "Think of the work, and not of your mind's weakness."

"I was thinking how much truth there is in what you say," I remarked.

The reply was: "Don't think even of that! Think of nothing but the barrow. Stick to the barrow. Work at the barrow. Work out the salvation of the hour and the minute on that barrow."

I wheeled a dozen steps more. Then the pet fear came before me, black as a thunder-cloud, and my mind reveried gloomily thus: "It 'll all go wrong. Everything does. Just my luck. I've put myself in this position. What can I say? What — "

"Barrow! Barrow!" called out the adviser.

"Hang the barrow!" I thought. "I want to think over my troubles in peace, and without being disturbed. Besides, what a ridiculous idea to put all one's mind on such an insignificant thing as a wheelbarrow, and neglect the great concerns of life.

"Great fiddlesticks!" said the monitor. "Let me tell you that the great concerns of life are what you call the little concerns. It's the little neglects that make the great accidents: the pebble on the rail that may throw the train off the track; the arsenic left on the provision shelf that's mistaken for baking powder, and poisons the family; the ladder that you're too lazy to adjust properly that tumbles and breaks your leg; the mouthful of food that you shovel into your mouth as if it were corn into a hopper, that gives you an indigestion, and makes you unfit for business or pleasure; the tack you recklessly throw on the floor runs into your foot and gives you the lockjaw; the 't' in writing you neglect to cross, and carelessly make with a loop instead of a straight line, so that your word spells 'lie' instead of 'tie,' and gets you into an awful entanglement with your best friend."

"That's the reason you never could learn to waltz. You put your mind, or tried to, on half a dozen steps at once, instead of one at a time. Pretty mess you made of it; jumbled and tumbled them all up together. You know your dancing-master gave you up in despair — said he never could make you dance lower down than your waist — never could get any dance in your legs, because you would n't or could n't get your brains into them."

So my monitor went on scolding, while I, again forgetting my barrow, went maundering off into a possible trying interview with a certain person which will probably never transpire, saying to myself: "I shall just go, and when I do see him I'm going in a gentle, mild form, and forgiving frame of mind. I'm going to fix up a mental state in advance."

Said the monitor: "You 've no business fixing up mental states in advance. You 've no business to take any thought just now what you 'll say or do ten days hence. Your business now is to wheel that barrow. Put all your strength on that, and let the future take care of itself. Do have some consideration for your poor arms and legs. Put your mind into them, and not send it away a hundred miles or more, or distribute it over forty objects, plans, whims, wants, and purposes for tomorrow. Let the morrow and the future take care of themselves, and you take care of that barrow."

But I could n't. I failed. I could n't wheel that barrow more than ten steps but that some miserable thought, whim, trouble, or anxiety would slip in and unseat what I call my mind. I could n't "beat the game." Still I do retain a faith in its curative properties for the blues, if long enough persisted in.

CHAPTER XV.

OMEGA.

And after all the house proved a failure, so far as my permanent happiness was concerned. When it was finished, and my corn was coming up, and my hens were in laying order, and three had commenced setting, and the morning-glory vines had commenced peeping in at the front windows, I commenced to mope. I could not get the happiness out of my hermitage that I had anticipated. I had imagined I could live happily alone with nature, and largely independent of the rest of the human race. I could n't. I don't believe anybody can. Nature herself taught me better. I found that the birds went in pairs and in flocks; that plants and trees grew in families; that ants lived in colonies, and that everything of its kind had a tendency to live and grow together. But here I was, a single bit of the human race, trying to live alone and away from my kind. The birds and trees were possibly glad of my admiration for them, but they said: "You don't belong to us. You should n't try to belong to us. You belong to your own race; go join them again; cultivate them. We live our own lives; you can't get wholly into our lives. You 're not a bird, that can live in a nest and on uncooked seeds; or a squirrel, that can live in a hole in a tree; or a tree, that

can root itself in one place and stay there, as you 've been trying to do. A hermit is one who tries to be a tree, and draw nourishment from one spot, when he's really a great deal more than a tree, and must draw life and recreation from many persons and places. A bear is not so foolish as to try and live among foxes; neither should a man try to live entirely among trees, because they can't give him all that he must have to get the most out of life."

So I left my hermitage, I presume, forever, and carted my bed and pots and pans to the house of a friend, perched on the brink of the palisades opposite Tinker's.

SKETCHES.

THE CALIFORNIAN'S RETURN:

OR,

TWENTY YEARS FROM HOME.

You went to California in 1852. You return home, for the first time, in 1872. Your home, in an eastern state, is Dozeville.

For the last twenty years, you have persisted in regarding Dozeville as still possessed of all the attractiveness it had for you in youth. Reflection told you it must have changed. People who had visited Dozeville and returned, bore back gloomy stories of its dullness and monotony. But you had not seen this. You could not realize it. There was, for you, but one Dozeville, young Dozeville, always young, because you saw it last in youth.

In day-dreams, in river and bank claims, picking and shovelling up to the middle in mud, slum, and water; by your cabin door, smoking the evening pipe; on the sterile ridges of Nevada, prospecting for "ledge," you have, in imagination, many times visited Dozeville. You have shaken hands with all its old citizens; you have been, for a time, the newly-returned lion of the place. No matter that letter after letter told you how sires, and grandsires, and matrons, and blooming, bright-eyed schoolmates had

dropped off; you would see yourself, on the first Sunday home at Dozeville, standing in the village church; and with what congregation could you fill it, save the one you had left?

The dream is realized; the continent is crossed; you stand bodily in Dozeville. None knows of your coming. It is night; the train has stopped at the depot. The railroad has been extended to Dozeville since you left; Dozevillians were talking of building this road when you were a boy. The "branch" is thirty miles in length. They were thirty years talking it over. Old Dozevillians had lived and died talking of it. At last, a brisk New York speculator came along, and in a few months the road was built.

There is a feeble effervescence about the Dozeville depot when the train stops. Compared with the roaring, hustling, crowding bustle of a wide-awake town, it is as the languid pop of a stale champagne bottle to the roar of a forty-two pounder. You get in a coach and are driven towards the family residence. It is a cold, clear, winter's night. You look out; the wind is roaring through the leafless sycamores; every street has its old curve; every house is in its old place. You recognize them all, as though you had left but yesterday; yet a gloom seems to hang about them, for you realize, now, that you are not to meet this or that old neighbor, whose daily coming and going from those gates seemed as unchangeable as the rising and setting of yonder moon. You have met your mother and sisters; you have almost been obliged to prove to them your identity! It was a surprise, but not exactly of the qual-

ity you had hoped for. They were hardly prepared to see a middle-aged man, worn by toil and exposure. The last photograph you sent home, ten years ago, implied still some appearance of youth. And after a few days, sometimes after a few hours, you make a discovery; you are not acquainted with your own mother and sisters. Twenty years is too long an absence; there is a great gap, a whole lifetime of incident and event between you and them. You are bound to a thousand Californian sympathies and associations, of which they know nothing. You betray them every hour. You are continually proving, now that you are back at the old home, seated in the old arm-chair, and on the very carpet over which you tumbled in your babyhood, that three-fourths of your heart is back in the land of geysers, grizzlies, and gold. The mother involuntarily sighs. This is not the boy's heart that left her twenty years ago; it is a strange man's heart, full of hopes, fears, plans, and remembrances unknown to her. It is a heart recast, remodelled. It was a beardless boy who left her; from the cradle to that last parting she had known his whole life; but this is a bearded man who has returned, with dashes of gray in his hair, with a different manner and a different voice. He brings with him the volume of twenty years of life, but she cannot read it all at once. He shows, carelessly, a page here and there; but it is broken and fragmentary to her. Her eyes brighten when he speaks concerning some event of his childhood; there she is upon familiar ground; that seems a piece of her own son. Hers, during your entire absence,

has been the quiet life at Dozeville, not making half a dozen new acquaintances; you have made hundreds in the same time, and you bring them all home with you.

There is a younger sister in the house. She has held a dim recollection of you; all her life has she longed to see the mysterious brother in California, who is always writing home that he is on the eve of making a fortune. She has painted an ideal of him in mind, and often touched up the picture with many perfections. And this, you, are the reality! She will not, to herself, own any disappointment; but she did suppose him a differently appearing man. In a crowd, he is not the very last man she would have singled out for her brother; but he would not have been the first.

The morning after your arrival you behold Dozeville by daylight. It is very much the same as when you left; the woods, fences, and corner posts are all in their old places; the vacant lots, fenced in and not built upon when you left, are still fenced in and vacant. A few veteran trees upon the main street have disappeared. Six new houses in twenty years! One church has been moved from its former location. Consequent on the change, there was great dissatisfaction among the congregation; a part seceded, and joined another denomination. It was all the work of a new minister, who had a mania for moving churches wherever he was settled. This occurred seven years ago; you hear all about it before being in Dozeville three days. The unpleasantness has not lost its first lustre; they pickle old contentions in Dozeville, and

so keep them ready for use in winter, when things are dull, and the branch road snowed up.

Dozeville and the surrounding territory seem to have shrunk. The day-journeys of your youth to Long Beach and Big Pond have dwindled to mere morning strolls. For years, in the mines, did you tramp two or three miles, over mountain and valley, to the nearest store, for your flour, beans, coffee, and pork, sometimes after a hard day's work. Dozeville miles are mere parlor promenades, compared to the rolling, rugged, steep miles from Mexican Flat to the Long Gulch store.

There are three hundred old acquaintances in Dozeville to be met and shaken hands with. All, after the first greetings, make the remark, "Growing old, I see, like the rest of us." This, to one of thirty-five, from sexagenarians, septuagenarians, and octogenarians, is hard to bear. The next inquiry is, "How have you been all this time?" This is a difficult question, also, to find an appropriate and applicable answer for, fifteen or twenty times a day. The long-wished-for welcome back to Dozeville proves a tedious operation. The apples wither in your grasp. Finally, you deem it advisable to restrict the number of these greetings to three per day. You court retirement, and avoid more the locality of the dozen stores, constituting the pulsating centre of Dozeville.

Let us read the Dozeville signs:

"William Barnes, Books and Stationery." This is your first youthful playmate. Twenty years ago you left him, just launched in the Dozeville bookstore; he keeps it still. Then he was a ruddy-faced,

lively young man, just married; now he has a shop-worn look of age. For twenty years he has stood behind that counter, selling primers, slates, slate pencils, worsted, and dolls, to little boys and girls. For twenty years he has trudged four times a day — breakfast, dinner, supper, and bedtime — to his dwelling-house, three hundred yards up the street. This, and a yearly trip to the city, for replenishing the stock of dolls, slates, pencils, and primers, has been his voyaging. What changes and hurry-skurryings have been yours during these twenty years! Up to Cariboo; down to Arizona; over the mountains to Nevada; looking on the rise and bustle of new mining towns; looking on them decayed, quiet, and deserted, years afterwards; living now in this community, now in that, composed of keen, sharp, clever men, gathered from the ends of the earth; witnessing their gradual dispersion and dropping away, some to new fields, some to the grave; forming associations, and collecting remembrances never to be forgotten; and through all this, William Barnes has clung to Dozeville, and Dozeville has clung to him, and has kept stationary.

"Samuel Scoy, Attorney-at-law." Another old playmate. Samuel Scoy was a very troublesome boy in the neighborhood. He does well to practice law now, for he was always breaking it in his youth. He was your partner in ringing door-bells, changing signs, and robbing melon patches. He is now a sober man of family. You are seated in his parlor. Your conversation with Samuel Scoy partakes, not of the easy, hilarious nature of former days; somehow you can-

not find the scapegrace of old. The satan in him seems to have entirely died out. But the door opens, and an elegant woman enters. Sam Scoy— no, Samuel Scoy, Esq., attorney-at-law, introduces you to his eldest daughter. Why are you surprised? You might have known this. Sam Scoy was married before you left home. This is Samuel Scoy, attorney-at-law, with whiskers inclining to gray, and a manner rather stern and severe; and this is his daughter. You are old enough to be the father of that self-possessed, elegant young woman. You never thought of that before; yet were she to visit Coyote camp, you and half a dozen other middle-aged bachelors would be ordering new suits from San Francisco. What a steady old worker is Time! Tadpoles will grow to frogs; infants will develop into elegant women. And this is Miss Scoy, the daughter of Sam Scoy, whom old Tom Bangs once gathered up by the coat collar and the baggy portion of his pantaloons, and chucked off the end of Little Neck wharf, for tampering with his eel-pots; and you are nearly old enough to be a grandfather. Now you begin to feel your years.

You are invited to a Dozeville evening party. Being a single man, you are deemed eligible for this sort of thing. There are present a score of old schoolmates' daughters, just like Miss Scoy. But Bill Barnes and Sam Scoy are not there. They renounced such parties years and years ago; they are old family men. They would as soon be caught playing marbles on the sidewalk. You prepare to go, and attire yourself with all the scrupulousness,

the care, and the anxiety of youth. You go, and find yourself a worn, out of place, aged bovine, amid a crowd of calves. The young ladies, Misses Scoy and Barnes, charming olive-branches of your schoolfellows, survey you curiously. They have often heard their parents speak of you. You were young and gay along with their sires. That period, by the glass in which they survey life, was ages and ages ago, coeval with the American Revolution, or the discovery of America, or the flood. You are an "old fellow." You are introduced to one after another; but there is no affiliation, as in days of yore. The gap of years, crow's-feet, and straggling gray hairs, lie between you and them. They listen for a period consistent with civility, to the cracked old love-song of this, their fathers' friend, and then fly away to young Mr. Cock Sparrow, just returned from his first collegiate term. Cock Sparrow was not even an infant when you left. Now, you feel older. More apples have withered.

It is your first Sunday at Dozeville, and you sit once more in the family pew at the old church. But the congregation seems thin. You miss many a stately gray head. The elders are the young men of 1852. Still, the edifice is for you thickly peopled, but not with the living. When last you sat here, another and an older minister preached a farewell and admonitory sermon to that company of young men, bound for California. They sat together in that pew yonder. They expected to return in five years, at least, with much gold. All had sweethearts, and those sweethearts expected, at the expiration of those

five years, to become wives. Most of them sat in the choir. Some of their daughters sing in the choir today. But the fathers of those young songsters never went to California, and forgot the pastor's admonitory sermon, while they mined, and traded, and drank, and gambled, and fought, and talked a language half Mexican, half English, and ran for office, and died violent deaths, and were elected to magnificent shrievalties worth $20,000 per annum, and learned to bake their own bread, and cook their own beans, and wash their own clothes. They never "made their piles" in the dry diggings, and lost them in turning the bed of the river, or were "broke," "strapped," or "panned out" at faro; then made more piles, to be "broke," "strapped," or "panned out" at monte. They never went to Kern River, Gold Bluffs, Frazer, Colorado, Montana, or Nevada. They remained at home; and when those five years were up, they married the girls wearied of waiting for the California adventurers, but few of whom ever returned; and those who did, brought back sad tales of many who remained. Thomas Spring was a bar-tender; William Dimple, a mule driver; Jeremiah Goodboy, a confirmed gambler; and it was whispered that Isaiah Sweetbriar, the deacon's son, had been hanged in the southern mines for stealing a mule. So the girls became Mrs. Barnes and Scoy, instead of Goodboy and Sweetbriar. All these memories come crowding thickly upon you, as you look on the pew where the young men bound for California sat twenty years ago. Are not Dozevillians impressed, also, by these remembrances, on coming

here every Sunday? No; the change has been gradual for them. They are not looking now over the wide and freshly cut gap of twenty years. They are thinking of their dinners, of Monday's washing, of the forthcoming festival for raising funds to repaint the steeple. What a lofty steeple that was once! Now the vane reaches up to the first limb of the right hand "Sentinel" at the Big Tree Grove.

Some of the Dozevillians hold but a dim remembrance of California's grand opening day, — the rush and gold fever of 1849; yet vessels, twenty odd years ago, carrying away the pick of their young men, sailed directly from Dozeville to San Francisco. But other and greater events have since transpired. California, to many of these Dozevillians, is almost the California of thirty years ago — a land remote and unknown. Some of them scarcely know the existence of the Yosemite Valley or the Big Trees. You are disgusted. Worse than this: some of them have quite forgotten certain of the young men born and bred in Dozeville, long resident in California. You speak of Tom Travers, who was a "Dozeville boy." Half of California knows Tom Travers. Here are men in Dozeville who shake their heads feebly at mention of Tom Travers. "Why, Uncle Abraham Travers' son, next to the oldest, say you? Well, yes, 'pears as if they do remember something of him." And then they stop, for they are hardly certain whether they do or not. It is not strange. Year after year in Dozeville have they trotted around a little circus-

ring of life; sitting about the same grocery stove in winter, sitting in the same chairs in front of that grocery in summer, droning over the weight of the last murdered hog, or the last strange face seen in the village; reviewing all the Dozeville tattle, until all other recollection is beaten and stamped out. The mental horizon of these Dozevillians has settled thickly just outside their little circus-ring of thought. No wonder that they should forget the well-known Thomas Travers.

You call on old Mr. Scott. He was old to you when a boy. He lives in and on books. He has travelled all over the world in books. He knows California well by books. He speaks of the Yo-Semite Valley, the Ca-lav-erous Grove of Big Trees, and the San Joe-a-kin River. You venture to correct his pronunciation, but he has his own laws for pronouncing California proper names, and will not stay corrected by a snip of thirty-five. There is another trial for you. Dick Harvey, the pioneer resident of Whiskey Flat, named by and for himself, has done little in California for the last twenty years, save dig, drink, dance and play poker. Dick's parents reside in Dozeville. Dick was one of that pewful of young men, westward bound, who listened to the admonitory sermon. Old Mr. Harvey, Dick's father, calls on you, that he may learn something of his son; he has not heard directly from him for fifteen years. Dick long since renounced writing home, and with it all idea of ever coming home. Unfortunately, you know too much of Dick. "What is he doing?" asks old Mr. Harvey. You

believe he is mining, and doing tolerably well. (Dick has been "doing" every one he could "make a raise" from, for years and years. His best suit is a gray shirt and a pair of blue jean overalls. He never comes to camp without making a disturbance. He was once offered $50 to quit the neighborhood and betake himself to other parts, but refused to leave under $100.) With all this fresh in your mind, you sit before old Mr. Harvey, who longs to hear something comforting from his lost and never-to-be-found son. You wish that he would go, because it is hard work, in answering his inquiries, to equivocate, and squirm, and sneak, and dodge about the truth, which is not to be told at all times about Dick.

One certain opinion possesses all Dozeville. It is that any man in good health, who has spent years in the land of gold, ought to have a fortune. Vainly you reason, and attempt some explanation on this point. Vainly you talk concerning the risks of mining; of the months idly spent on Pacific Flat, waiting for water; of the years employed in baring the river's bed at Grizzly Canon; of the race, so expensively cut through a solid granite ledge; of the flume at Split Bar, costing thousands, only to be swept down stream by the fall freshets; of the gravel, which did not prospect a cent to the cart load when you did get into the bed of the river; of the tunnel it took years to bore through the rim-rock of Table Mountain; of the high prices paid for water, which took all the life out of your profits in the hydraulic claim at Coyote Creek; of the capital you

put into the Columbia quartz-lead, whose rock assayed a cent per pound, and whose actual returns fell a little short of a cent per ton; of the fruitless scrambles to Frazer River, to Colorado; of the unsuccessful hunt for the Comstock extension in Nevada. All this is useless. Dozevillians have it firmly rooted in their brains, that when a man goes to California, it is his duty to get rich. That he does not, is an indication of a loose screw in his moral machinery. You cannot alter their minds. They have been locked in this conviction for twenty years, and the wards are too old and rusty to be turned back, without danger of breaking to pieces.

You remain in your dear old Dozeville a couple of months. Would you stay there for life? Will you call it your home now?

No, no, no! There is another land, nearer the setting sun, which claims you for its own. You are longing now for San Francisco, with its afternoon gales, and mosaic of nationality; for the sight of the Contra Costa hills, flecked in the springtime with their thousand shades of green, and cloud, and sunshine; for Tamalpais at eve, with avalanches of white fog rolling down its sides; for the great inland plains, walled westward by the dimly blue Coast Range, eastward by the far-away snow-tipped Sierras; for the dark green chaparral, and the scent of pine and balsam in the foothills, with their rich fruitage and heavy laden vines. Dozeville is dear, but it is not galvanic enough for you. You require earthquakes, grizzlies, and periodical gold fevers. Dozeville is pleasant, calm, and quiet, but it seems the calm and

quiet of a well-kept church-yard. It abounds overmuch with widows, carefully husbanding the property of deceased partners. It is outflanked by too many rheumatic aunts, with lame backs and Dutch clocks. Dozeville is dear, because it was your boyhood's home. But the lively Dozeville of your youth no longer exists. The realized Dozeville of 1872 has passed away forever.

FRENCH WITHOUT A MASTER.

My French teacher from East Haddam, on the banks of the Connecticut River, taught me French some thirty odd years ago. He was a good, honest man, and the only reason he was a fraud in certain respects was, that he did not know he was one. He made me commit some words and sentences to memory, and I repeated these to him.

In those days this was called "learning," though I never could see how mere words committed to memory out of a book, taught a man or a woman to ride a horse, or sail a boat, or shoot well, or swim well, or manage a primary meeting, or even plead a case in plain, clear, common-sense fashion before a jury, or do anything else in which brains, clear sight, decision, courage, or energy were required.

However, he taught me something called French in America. It was never recognized for French in Paris. It would n't wash over there. I tried it first on a French cabman. He did n't understand a word I said, until I showed him printed French in my guide-book, that I had been trying on him. He insisted on driving me to one place, when I wanted to go to another. I wanted to go to a certain hotel mentioned in my guide-book. I showed him the name of this hotel, as printed in that book. The

cabman shook his head. He talked a good deal of his French, and in a very decided manner. I talked a good deal of my French, in a very decided manner. As we did not understand each other, the result finally arrived at by either party was not clear. Finally I jumped into his cab. He drove off. I wondered to myself, as my bones rattled over the stones, where Connecticut French was carrying me. He took me to a mean-looking house, in a mean-looking street. It was not the place mentioned in my guide-book. I again showed the cabman the former name and number in the book. He shook his head, and poured on me torrents of Gallic unintelligibility. I was obstinate. He drove at last to the street and house I desired, and pointed triumphantly with his whip to the number of the building I had pointed out. It was not a hotel at all. It had been a hotel, but was changed into an immense clothing store. I understood then what the cabman had been trying to tell me. Mine was an old guide-book, behind the times and changes of the times. However, I got out with my two carpet-bags and set out down the street, I knew not whither. I was ashamed of my ignorance. I pretended, however, so far as manner went, that it was all right; that I knew where I was going; that I knew what I wanted. And so I did. I wanted to get out of sight and sound of that cabman. He looked at me as I walked off, and grinned. I felt his grin all through me. It made my flesh creep, crawl, and quiver. I knew that he knew that I was trying to play a part, and he knew that I knew that he knew it. I turned the first corner I came

to, walked along the street a short distance, turned back, peeped round the corner, and saw with relief that the fiend and his cab had gone. I felt better, breathed easier, and perspired freer. The first trial was over, I was alone in Paris; alone, homeless and languageless, with my two carpet-bags. In traveling, it is well to carry two bags. One can be taken, and the other left full of bricks at your hotel, as security for your board bill, in case your remittances don't come. In foreign lands, the American is never cashless for any other cause than that of his remittances from home not coming, which is always strictly true. They do not come in cases, because they never started to come, nor had anything or anybody to start them, either.

I found a roof to shelter me at last, with a very kind lady, who pitied me because I should return to that barbarous United States, in her geographical estimation but a cab-drive from Brazil; who caught me trying to eat my first snails raw; who taught me how to cook them, by setting the shells on the coals, and so allowing the butter with which they close the shell, to run down and cook the reptile within, and which were to me equally tasteless, either raw or cooked. As an edible, I cannot indorse the snail, and think him better employed in his old occupation as the symbol of laziness, and am not sure he's not lazy as made out, and think he knows his own business best, anyway.

I started out on my first morning in Paris, not knowing, not caring, where I went. I had neither guide nor guide-book. I didn't want so much to

see what others had seen, as what they had n't seen. I was hungry. I found a restaurant. I found, on entering, that the meal was served on an upper floor. I did n't want then to go upstairs, but had no French at hand which would explain *why* I did n't want to go upstairs. So I felt compelled to go upstairs, to avoid seeming suspicious. I found a long table, and some forty Frenchmen seated thereat at their half-past-ten breakfast. There was no written bill of fare. I had relied on the written bill of fare, because I could point to the things on the paper I would eat. The waiter gabbled over the dishes they served. I could not understand a word. I was speechless. Forty Frenchmen were looking at me. I said at last in despair, "Pommes de terre — potatoes." The waiter talked and talked. I know now he was asking me how I would have them served. In France potatoes are served variously. How could I name the style I wanted? I said simply, "potatoes."

Potatoes — potatoes. Yet I realized the absurdity of ordering a breakfast of potatoes only, when there were so many other things to eat. I knew there were other good things, because I saw them and smelled them to the right and left on my neighbors' plates, but I knew not their French names. I dared not point to my neighbor's plate, and say, "I want some of that." The waiter brought potatoes. He brought them first plain boiled, in their jackets; then he brought them fried; then he brought them stewed. Then a suspicion of a horrible truth commenced to dawn upon me. It had been assumed that I would have a potato breakfast, and of all possible styles:

and potatoes are cooked in many fashions in France. I don't know how many dishes of potatoes they did bring. I did know that I was an object of curiosity and amusement to my foreign friends present.

I ate and perspired and was ashamed, and wished I was out of it, and still the potatoes kept coming. Somebody called for a dish which sounded like marengo. I counseled to myself, that if I called for "marengo" it might stop the avalanche of potatoes, as well as the quiet ridicule of my neighbors. Potatoes and ridicule together are appetizing. I did n't know what marengo would result in, whether fish, flesh, or fowl. It was a sort of gastronomical lottery. The real name is maringot.

I don't know now exactly what that maringot was. I don't want to know. If I must eat my peck of extraneous matter, ere I shuffle off my body this expensive suit of mortality, which is always singing out for something to put on it or in it, why should I insist on a chemical analysis of all I eat? But the maringot was good, better than the monotony of ever changing and diversified courses of potatoes. I made it last a long time, because I wanted to put off, as long as possible, my next sure exposure of ignorance, when the waiter should come and gabble. It was a painful breakfast. It lasted nearly an hour. It gave me no good. It did give me the dyspepsia; any mental strain or misery will when you 're eating. Anxiety is much harder to digest than fat pork. And all this came of learning French by the eye instead of the ear, of a Gaul from East Haddam, Conn.

I went to a bath-house. The attendant young woman asked me whether I would have a bath simple or otherwise. I said simple. I was shown my bath-room. She turned on the water, and left me without soap or towels. Then I understood, as regards a bath, what simplicity meant in France. I rung for soap and towels. The girl brought me programmes of each. There were four kinds of soap, and five kinds of towels — prices extra. In Europe everything is extra.

There were head towels, ear towels, a sheet to put on the bottom of the bath-tub, and other towels. I chose a thing called a p-e-i-g-n-o-i-r, which happened, of all the list, to be no towel at all. It turned out to be a hot baked linen night-gown or wrap, with sleeves, and open in front. When buttoned up, it was very becoming to me. It was hot, just as if it had come from the oven. On coming from my bath, I did n't know what to do with it, so I put it on and sat in it. It was comfortable, a little too hot at first in places, but soon cooled off. I had to get my money's worth out of it somehow. Its real use is to sit in it while you call the attendant to turn off the hot water and turn on the cold.

After taking that bath I went to the station-house. I went there on a tour of investigation, and because I was obliged to go there. Some people seek station-houses as some people seek greatness. Other people have them thrust upon them, as they have greatness. I had this station-house thrust upon me, or rather I was thrust inside this station-house.

Naturally, you wish to know why. Your curiosity

is excited. I shall let it remain excited. I shall not tell you, because so long as your curiosity remains excited, you are on the *qui vive*. That's French. It means there's something more in this world you want to find out, and that, consequently, you have a purpose in life. That's a good thing to have. If I told you what caused my arrest in Paris, and detention for a night in the station-house, your curiosity would be satisfied, and you might no longer have a purpose in life, or something to live for.

The non-committal and unsatisfactory reason I shall give for becoming a temporary, if not an honored guest in the Parisian station is, that I disturbed temporarily the peace of the French Republic. The French Republic then existed on a slender foundation. It didn't take much to shake its foundation. I was the "Not much."

My cell was furnished with a floor, a ceiling, and a bench. It was as simple and primitive as Eve's costume before the fall. In front of it was a French soldier with a gun. I do not know whether it was loaded. I know I was "loaded," though, when I went in that cell.

Being "loaded," I was taken in the morning before a judge of some sort, examined, and discharged. Not knowing the language, I don't know what he found when he examined and discharged me. I should like to have examined him, but couldn't, as he did not speak Connecticut French. This trial was nothing as compared with the one which followed immediately. I had then to appear before a lady I had previously married, and account satisfac-

torily, or otherwise, for my staying out all night. I accounted otherwise, and was "found guilty." But it was by no means all over. In France, it appears they discharge you first, and try you afterward. At least so they did with me.

I don't know where I was tried, I don't know when, I don't know who tried me, I don't care; I know only that, two months after my release, a State official left a long paper at my lodgings, informing me of the circumstance, and the amount of the fine and costs. When first I looked at the paper and column of figures, I felt as if the balance of my earthly life might be spent in making money enough to pay this fine. On closer examination, I discovered, that while the column of figures was imposing as to length, it was very weak as to actual amount. On reducing it to American currency, I found the entire sum to be $4.20. Justice is cheap in France, even if it is rather slow in transit.

I was then worth $4.20, and desired to pay the fine immediately. I so desired, not so much from honorable and high-minded motives, as to keep the costs from swelling up. If they swelled, I feared in time they might amount to $5, and "bust" me. I never could find anybody who felt authorized to take my fine. I went to three or four different mayors' offices. In Paris and around it there 's a mayor for every ward, who has a court and a court-house, and marries people and does other work. I went to the Boulogne mayor's office. They would not take my fine. They told me to go to Sevres. The Sevres mayor said he was not entitled to take the fine, and

told me to go somewhere else. I went somewhere else. It was always the same story.

You see, in France, nobody will take money unless they feel authorized to do so. In this particular, the French are wonderfully like us here in New York and the surrounding towns. I began then to fear that I might spend the remainder of my days in hunting an authority authorized to receive this fine, because if I did n't pay it I might never be able to quit Paris, for the reason, that within forty-eight hours after you enter that city, your name, age, occupation, size, weight, complexion, are taken down by an officer appointed for that purpose, and you are known and booked and registered, so that you can be nabbed if you 're wanted.

I went then to my landlord for advice. He said to me, "Soyez tranquille." That's French. It means, "Keep quiet, keep shady. Stop chinning. Mind your own business, and let the French Republic take care of its own. If you won't run after the French government, it won't run after you." I did so. I soye'd tranquille. I left Paris undisturbed. I left, a defaulter to the French Republic in the sum of $4.20; and I know not now to what dimensions it may have grown, at the rate of three cents for serving repeated summons. It may amount to $6. I am liable to rearrest for this cause the moment I re-enter Paris.

I took French lessons in Paris of M. Charles and family. We met by appointment two evenings a week, and hurled murdered French and English alternately at each other. M. Charles was a scholar,

and well versed in English grammar. But of the idiom of our language he knew nothing. He used English words with reference entirely to their signification in French, just as I did French words relative to their meaning in English. He wished once to ask me to accompany the family to a picnic in the country. "Sir," said he (he always called me "Sir Mulford," for he said he must have something to answer for the invariable French prefix of monsieur), "Sir, will you to go for me to dine upon the herbs?"

Grass diet, I thought. Does he take me for that ancient vegetarian, Nebuchadnezzar? He corrected himself instantly. "No," said he. "What a fool I am! I mean will you travel with me, to eat up in the trees?" He takes me for a giraffe now, I thought. But M. Charles once more corrected himself. Said he: "No, no, I am a foolish to ask you to dine with me like one leetle bird." You may see, at this rate, it took us some time to travel over a small amount of territory; and you will recollect, also, that when you learn your French mostly from translation and grammar, you run the risk of making just such mistakes in conversing with a Frenchman.

M. Charles, who lived over the foundations of the old Bastile, was a true French gentleman, pure in thought, faithful to a bed-ridden mother, loving, faithful and considerate to his wife, who, in her long black blouse, was his daily assistant in business (photography), and a more loving and pleasant family I never met, huddled, as eight of them were, in four small rooms. I met others like him.

Don't believe all you hear about French immorality. Don't accept implicitly, an impression of that nation, current among us for so many generations, given out and coming from a people on the other side of the channel, among whom, on a Saturday night, you may find thousands of gin palaces full of boozing, drunken men and women ; among whom in London's east end, the drunken woman is an every-day sight, as common as the wife-beating husband. I am neither defending nor abusing. The French have sins. So have the English. So have I. So, possibly, have you. The spirit is willing, but the flesh is weak—especially on an empty stomach, when the lord of creation has to wait ten minutes overtime for his dinner, and while so doing finds his wife's milliner's bill three times as much as he expected, when he has been fruitlessly running that morning all over town, to borrow money to meet a bank obligation, and just then the bungling servant girl smashes the new soup tureen.

I will now for a moment become dogmatic and oracular. If you want really to learn any foreign language, get its pronunciation in your ear first, and before anything else. Get one, two, three words of it, even before you know their meaning. Get the swing of their sound. Learn it as you really learned you own native tongue, when you were two, three, or four years old. If you are with people who talk correct English, you will talk correct English. If you are much with people who talk correct French, you will in time talk correct French. The ear must be educated first, and before the eye. If

you learn to translate much French, and you are not hearing it spoken, you are teaching only your eye, and your mental ear is talking most of that French, or German, or Italian to yourself, with the English accent; and for all talking purposes, with Frenchman, German or Italian, you are worse off than if you had never so studied at all; for as regards pronunciation, you must unlearn nearly all your errors of accent so acquired, before you can commence squarely, and then when you go to France, you will not be a red-handed murderer of their language. Of course in France, no matter how great your blunders, they will compliment you on your growing proficiency in their language, providing you pay your bills regularly. For the French are a very polite people, and I like them for so being. Politeness, even if only on the surface, is, I think, more agreeable than boorishness on the surface. One of my French landladies told me how they lived, during the siege of Paris, on horse and donkey meat. She explained or symbolized donkey to me, by raising her large hands to her ears, and working them donkey fashion. I understood. I tumbled to her vernacular racket. Then she complimented me on my rapid proficiency in French, and I have no doubt afterward remarked to her cronies, that the American was at home when a brother donkey was raised.

After visiting the tomb of the Emperor Napoleon, I told a French lady, with appropriate seriousness, that I had visited the emperor's tambour, which meant the emperor's drum. She tried to be polite,

but failed. She laughed in my face. I justified her in so doing, and I believe that to this day, one Frenchwoman believes that one American believes that the emperor carried the bass drum. Friends, it's a hazardous business handling a foreign tongue, when you're all at sea among a foreign people, because you don't always know what you've said when you've said it, and its embarrassing, when you think you've complimented a lady on her looks, to find, possibly, that you've called her an aged chicken, or words to that effect.

If you want to learn French, pitch in and talk it when you have a chance to talk it with the French. Mangle it. Mutilate it. Murder it. You must blunder at first in learning anything. You tumbled down ten thousand times in learning to walk. A great many of us are afraid to learn anything new, because we must blunder and show awkwardness in learning. What's the use of learning French? What's the use of learning anything new when our bodies are forty, fifty, sixty years old. This: To keep young. You know, of course, that your body is only an instrument; that your mind is the unseen power that uses it; that if you are always in a fright, a fret, a worry, your body, your face, soon has the lines and marks of that state of mind carved on it.

What's the use, then, of learning French, of learning new games, plays, diversions, arts? This: To keep young, fresh, vigorous in mind. To keep so in mind, and your body will follow suit. Half the vigor and elasticity of youth comes because it's

the season for learning new things. Put a man at a desk, make him a mere copyist, a machine, with nothing else to do or think of, no new plans or enterprises, and he ages more in ten years than others do in thirty. When your mind stops growing, and becomes a treadmill, the body soon commences to decay.

It is thinking the same old things from year to year, that makes men and women old.

When a boy or a girl, man or woman stops learning new things, they commence to fossilize. There are old fogies at thirty as well as sixty — of both sexes. There is a science or faculty of learning to learn. The more things you learn to do, whether with the hands or the head, the more power you gather to do — anything. When people live up to this idea, — and more do live up to it now than ever before, — there will be no old age of senility, of lethargy, of giving up all interest in life, of yawning, and singing out "Heigh-ho!" every five minutes, as if life was a burden, and you were tired of waiting for the undertaker to come and bury you.